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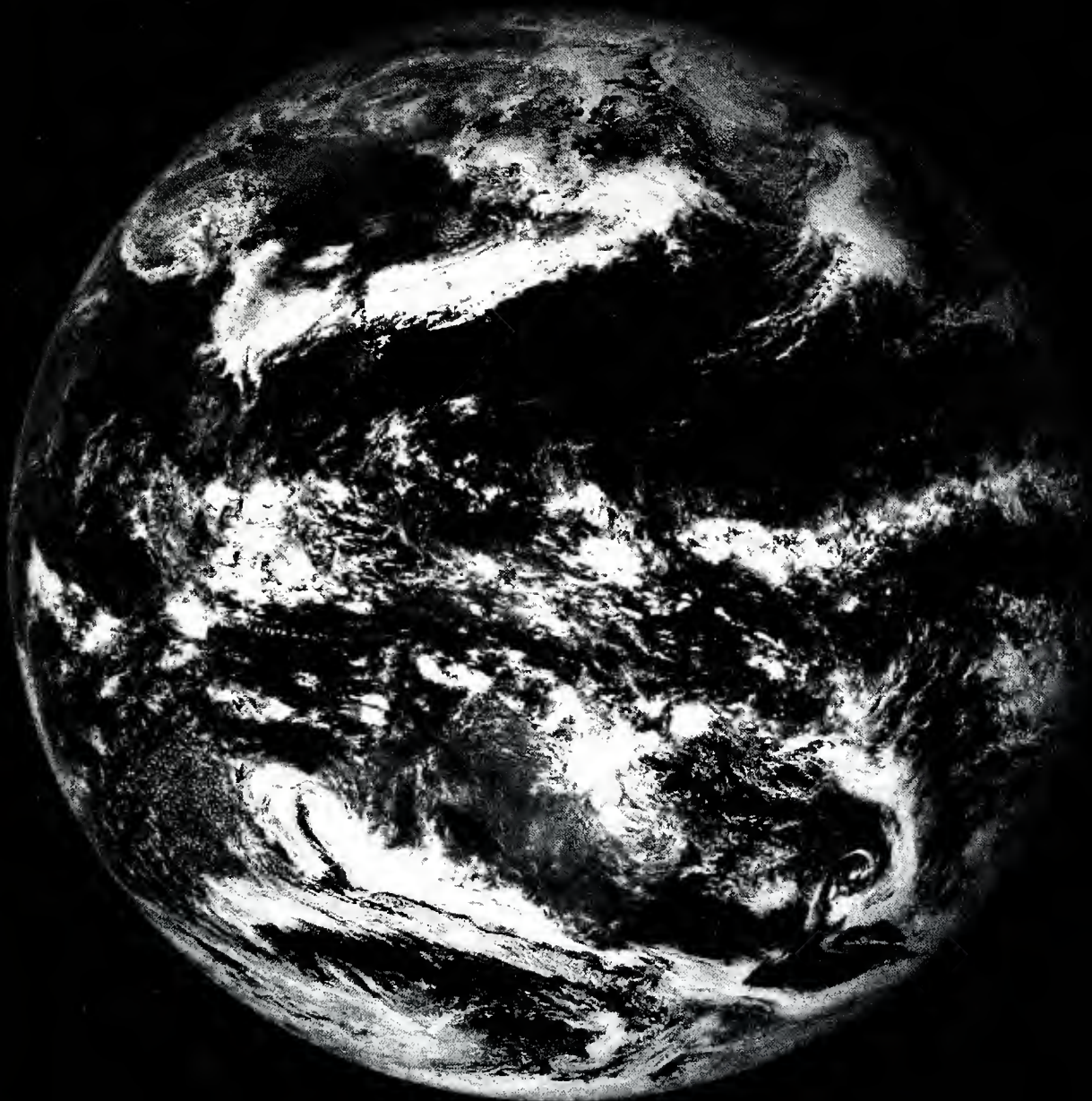

Sustainable Development

Editors' Note

Sustainable development--these are two words that planners are hearing more frequently as people talk about the future of how we should plan and how we should live. And yet, many find it difficult to define sustainable development and even harder to identify how it can be incorporated into their everyday lives or planning practices. The articles in this issue of *Carolina Planning* seek to offer insights into how the concept of sustainable development can be transformed into practice and how it is being adopted by communities and government agencies to realize sustainable goals.

Our first article, by David J. Brower, serves to introduce the concept of sustainable development and provide some background about how it has risen to the forefront of international discussion. The following articles then describe specific programs and initiatives that have been adopted or are under consideration around the country to assist in the effort of planning for sustainable communities.

Given the importance of agriculture to North Carolina's economy and history, it is fitting to begin with Nancy Agnew's article describing the federal government's Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (SARE) Program and how SARE is encouraging revisions to existing agricultural practices. In an article of particular interest to urban land use planners, J. Gary Lawrence, Director of Planning for the City of Seattle, details how that city incorporated sustainability goals into their recent comprehensive planning process. In the area of economic and community development is a *Carolina Planning* interview with Nina Morais, Joseph McDomick, and Sarah Bobrow, representatives from the Penn School for Preservation on St. Helena's Island, off the coast of South Carolina. Their efforts are focused on reviving sustainable economic practices on the Sea Islands to ensure the continued survival of the unique heritage of the long-time residents of the islands.

Ylang Nguyen discusses some of the initiatives being undertaken at the state level to incorporate sustainability of all types, including environmental and economic sustainability, into legislation and public policy. The issue of housing is addressed next by Allan Rosen, with an examination of cohousing as a possible component of sustainable communities. In the final article, Karen Walz focuses on how planners can reach out to the public, community leaders, and other local officials to achieve consensus about what form sustainability should take within their communities.

This issue also contains a photograph of the first-prize painting by Jason Cashman from the second annual Weiss Competition on Urban Livability. Finally, we include abstracts from some recent Masters Projects by students in the Department of City and Regional Planning at the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill to make planners aware of some of the resources available from the department. We hope that this issue provides some "food for thought" as well as useful information about how to practice sustainable development in your community.

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An Introduction to Sustainable Development

David J. Brower

Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of present generations without prejudicing the ability of future generations to meet their needs. This definition, coined by the World Commission on Environment and Development (often referred to as the Brundtland Commission) has caught the attention and earned the support of peoples around the world as perhaps no other concept has.

A great many books and even more articles have been written about the meaning of sustainable development. However, several elements of the definition are especially important. First, sustainable development is a qualitative concept, not necessarily a quantitative one. It speaks primarily of *what kind* of development, as opposed to *how much,* should be pursued. It also recognizes that there is going to be a significant increase in global population irrespective of the population policies adopted and that this growth must be accommodated. Second, it recognizes that the economy and the environment are not in conflict but are irrevocably interconnected. A sustainable economy depends on a sustainable environment while a sustainable environment is not possible without a sustainable economy.

Next, this definition speaks in terms of needs, not desires. It does not promise a BMW in every pot, and yet it does not demand major sacrifices. It does, however, imply a change in values--values that recognize other peoples, other generations, other species, and the earth itself. Lastly, it speaks of meeting the needs of present generations, meaning people of all nations, races, sexes, and ages, in addition to those of future generations.

Sustainable development is what we planners would call a goal. It is a challenge to achieve a better quality of life for all humans, born and unborn, in this country and in all countries. It is not like comprehensive planning, strategic planning, growth management, or development management with which we are more familiar and probably more comfortable. These are not goals but tools and techniques used to achieve a set of locally defined goals. They can be useful in moving a jurisdiction in the direction of sustainable development, but the means should not be confused with ends.

Sustainable development requires that we consider the needs of all peoples, generations, species, and the earth in addition to the health, safety, and general welfare of the voters in the jurisdiction in which we happen to be working. However daunting the challenge, it has been accepted around the world by countries, regions, provinces, and cities, by financial institutions and corporations, and by non-governmental organizations. A solid global foundation for action towards sustainable development was laid with the United Nations Conference on the Environment and Development (UNCED), held in 1992 in Rio de Janeiro, and the creation in 1993 of the United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development.

In this country, the Bush administration did not take UNCED seriously but President Clinton has. He has formed the President's Council on Sustainable Development, which is made up of leaders from the public and private sectors as well as from the spiritual and

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environmental communities. Here in North Carolina, Governor Hunt has created the Commission for a Competitive North Carolina, which early in its deliberations took active notice of sustainable development. A number of cities in the United States, including Seattle, Washington, Portland, Oregon, and Boulder, Colorado have incorporated the notion of sustainability into their planning programs. Momentum seems to be building.

At UNCED, commonly called the Earth Summit, an agreement called *Agenda 21: Program of Action for Sustainable Development* was negotiated by the governments at the conference. The introduction to *Agenda 21* calls it a "comprehensive blueprint for action to be taken globally--from now into the twenty-first century--by governments, United Nations organizations, development agencies, non-governmental organizations, and independent-sector groups, in every area in which human activity impacts on the environment." Underlying the Earth Summit agreements is the idea that humanity has reached a turning point. We can continue with present policies which are deepening economic divisions within and between countries, which increase poverty, hunger, sickness, and illiteracy, and cause the continuing deterioration of the ecosystem on which life on Earth depends. Or we can change course, better managing and protecting the ecosystem and bringing about a more prosperous future for us all.

Chapter Seven of *Agenda 21,* "Promoting Sustainable Human Settlement Development" defines sustainable development in terms more familiar to planners: the overall human settlement objective is to improve the social, economic, and environmental quality of human settlements and the living and working environments of all people, in particular the urban and rural poor. The program areas included in the chapter are:

- Providing adequate shelter for all;
- Improving human settlement management;
- Promoting sustainable land-use planning and management;
- Promoting the integrated provision of environmental infrastructure: water, sanitation drainage and solid-waste management;
- Promoting sustainable energy and transport systems in human settlements;
- Promoting human settlement planning and management in disaster-prone areas;
- Promoting sustainable construction industry activities;
- Promoting human resource development and capacity-building for human settlement development.

Agenda 21 suggests a number of mechanisms that can and should be used to achieve sustainable land-use planning and management. One suggestion is that all countries undertake a comprehensive inventory of their land resources in order to establish a land information system. Such a system would classify land resources according to their most appropriate uses. For example, environmentally fragile or disaster-prone areas would be identified for special protection measures.

It also urges all countries to develop land-resource management plans to guide land-resource development and utilization. To that end, it recommends that countries should do the following:

(1) Establish national legislation to guide the implementation of public policies for environmentally sound urban development, land utilization, housing, and the improved management of urban expansion;

(2) Create efficient and accessible land markets that meet community development needs by improving land registry systems and streamlining procedures in land transactions;

(3) Develop fiscal incentives and land-use control measures, including land-use planning solutions for a more rational and environmentally sound use of limited land resources;

(4) Encourage partnerships among the public, private, and community sectors in managing land resources for human settlements development;

(5) Strengthen community-based land-resource protection practices in existing urban and rural settlements;

(6) Establish appropriate forms of land tenure that provide security of tenure for all land-users, especially indigenous people, women, local communities, low-income urban dwellers, and the rural poor;

(7) Accelerate efforts to promote access to land by the urban and rural poor, including credit schemes for the purchase of land and for building, acquiring, or improving safe and healthy shelter and infrastructure services;

(8) Develop and support the implementation of improved land-management practices that deal

comprehensively with potentially competing land requirements for agriculture, industry, transport, urban development, green spaces, preserves, and other vital needs;

(9) Promote understanding among policy makers of the adverse consequences of unplanned settlements in environmentally vulnerable areas and of appropriate national and local land-use and settlements policies required for this purpose.

From this list, several conclusions are obvious:

- This a very large agenda;
- Planners can and should play a very important role; and
- There is an almost infinite variety of things that planners can do.

But where to start? It would be nice to have a clean slate, a large budget, and a perfect legislative framework. None of us do, but we do have a lot that can be done here and now. The articles that follow discuss some of the creative ideas, projects, and programs related to planning that are being formulated and implemented to create a more sustainable future. CP

Sustainable Agriculture and the SARE Program

Nancy C. Agnew

General concepts of sustainability have been gaining currency in recent years as publications such as *Our Common Future* (1987) and events such as the 1992 Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro push sustainable development issues into the forefront of critical discussion on growth, development, and finite resources. Agricultural practices are critical to any discussion of sustainability as current agricultural practices worldwide are considered environmentally unsound. Increasing public awareness of problems associated with conventional agricultural practices and a growing interest in concepts of sustainable development have converged to bring the subject of sustainable agriculture out of the periphery and into the center of discussion on the future of agriculture in the United States.

Until recently, conventional agricultural production was never questioned. Rather, its increasing concentration into bigger units and the subsequent demise of many family farms and rural communities has been accepted as historical inevitability. Earl Butz, former U.S. Secretary of Agriculture, will long be remembered for his infamous edict, "Get big or get out," delivered during the heyday of farm expansion in the 1970s. At about the same time, environmentalists and advocates of family farms began to speak out about the inadequacies of conventional agriculture. Environmentalists were concerned about soil erosion, groundwater adulteration, and bio-genetic engineering. Family farm advocates were concerned with adequate incomes and the health of rural communities and businesses. Agricultural scientists were noting limits to production despite increasing chemical input.[1] Consumers joined in, voicing concern about chemical residues on their food and deteriorating water quality. In response, the U.S. Congress renewed its mandate to support the family farm system of agriculture but added a new focus--to preserve family farms and to do so in a way that enhances environmental quality and the natural resource base.

This shift is reflected in the U.S. Congress's 1985 call for a program of Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (SARE). Sustainable agriculture had acquired government sanction. However, any effort to promote sustainable agriculture should not leave out the concept of sustainable communities. This paper discusses the SARE program, assesses its contribution to the promotion of sustainable agriculture, and evaluates the program's success in fostering sustainable communities.

What is Sustainable Agriculture?

American farmers are touted as the best food producers in the world. They provide consumers with inexpensive, high-quality food in seemingly unlimited quantities. Vast natural resources, the technical expertise of the land-grant system of universities, and receptive government policies combine to produce this bountiful harvest. The type of agriculture responsible for this level of production is known as conventional agriculture. It is characterized as large-scale, capital-intensive, highly-mechanized, and focused on monocultures and the extensive use of pesticides, herbicides, and fertilizers. It is also characterized by an increase in concentration: 85 percent of food in this country is

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produced on 15 percent of the farms.[2] These are not the family farms emblazoned upon the American imagination. They are huge corporate farms, vertically-integrated and well-financed.

Sustainable agriculture suffers from a crisis of definition. It is referred to by a variety of names--low input, alternative, organic, regenerative--that do not provide a completely accurate picture. "Low input" merely refers to less use of outside materials, usually chemical inputs. "Alternative" can simply mean something other than the ordinary, such as raising ostriches in Oklahoma or kiwi in South Carolina, but it usually refers to resource-conserving agriculture. "Organic" agriculture forbids chemical use, but might not make provisions for water conservation. "Regenerative" means a system that is able to reproduce the resources it requires. "Sustainable" implies the ability to continue indefinitely and is the name that seems to have gathered most acceptance. All these labels display a bias towards the environment, resource conservation, productivity, and farm-level economics.[3]

Consideration of quality-of-life issues and sustainable rural communities does not usually enter the definitional debate. The assumption appears to be that sustainable agriculture leads to sustainable communities, or conversely, that sustainable agriculture is necessarily practiced in sustainable communities. Neither assumption is a given. Family farmers and rural communities are not guaranteed their vitality by the adoption of sustainable agricultural practices. Sustainable agricultural practices could be co-opted by conventional agriculturalists, if they choose to adopt them, thus continuing the domination of agricultural production by large-scale, corporate farms and hastening the decline of rural farming communities. If the promotion of quality-of-life issues and sustainable communities is considered part of the sustainable agriculture paradigm, then it should be incorporated into the definition of sustainable agriculture.

Allen et al. have addressed this issue, holding that sustainable agriculture concepts must move beyond a preference for environmental issues and give greater consideration to social issues such as .inter- and intra-generational equity and the whole-systems nature of agriculture. They offer this definition: "A sustainable agriculture is one that equitably balances concerns of environmental soundness, economic vitality, and social justice among all sectors of society."[4] Expanding the definition shows that "issues such as farm worker rights and inner-city hunger are as central to the goals of agricultural sustainability as soil erosion and groundwater contamination."[5] While this definition is broad in concept and reminiscent of the Brundtland Commission's definition of sustainable development,[6] it tempers the usual disproportionate importance given to environmental interests with a concern for quality-of-life issues.

The U.S. Congress uses a definition from the Food, Agriculture, Conservation and Trade (FACT) Act of 1990 that defines sustainable agriculture as follows:

"An integrated system of plant and animal production practices having a site-specific application that will, over the long term, satisfy human food and fiber needs; enhance environmental quality and the natural resource base upon which the agricultural economy depends; make the most efficient use of nonrenewable resources and on-farm/ranch resources and integrate, where appropriate, natural biological cycles and controls; sustain the economic vitality of farm/ranch operations; and enhance the quality of life for farmers and ranchers, and for society as a whole."[7]

This comprehensive definition guides the SARE program. It is notable that the definition includes reference to quality-of-life issues for farmers and society as a whole.

For the layman, sustainable agriculture can be described as low-input, resource-conserving, environment-enhancing, small-scale, and community-sustaining. These characteristics are in direct contrast to the characteristics of conventional agriculture stated earlier. Further distinctions between conventional agriculture and sustainable agriculture have been developed by Beus and Dunlop. Their distillation of the key elements of the two competing agricultural paradigms are included in Table 1.[8] These distinctions go beyond such comparisons as large-scale versus small-scale, high-input versus low-input, and resource-expending

CONVENTIONAL AGRICULTURE	ALTERNATIVE AGRICULTURE
* Centralization	* Decentralization
* Dependence	* Independence
* Competition	* Community
* Domination of Nature	* Harmony with Nature
* Specialization	* Diversity
* Exploitation	* Restraint

Table 1: Key Elements of Two Competing Agricultural Paradigms

versus resource-conserving. Beus and Dunlop identify societal attributes that delve deeply into our national psyche and which seem, interestingly enough, to represent two distinct phases of our national history.

The key elements of the alternative agriculture paradigm aptly describe the yeoman ideals of the Jeffersonian democracy that shaped the nation, whereas the key elements of the conventional agriculture paradigm could easily describe dominant trends in business and politics during the present era. This is not to say that the practice of sustainable agriculture entails setting the clock back 200 years, but it does highlight the importance of acquiring a different set of ideals, one that considers not only the current generation, but more importantly, future ones.

The SARE Program

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) was mandated by Congress to develop a sustainable agriculture program in 1985 (then called LISA for Low-Input Sustainable Agriculture) but did not establish the program until 1988. Reasons for the delay in the initiation of the program are unclear. The USDA has consistently requested less funding for the program than has been appropriated. Such foot-dragging from an institutional Goliath like the USDA might be expected, especially when it involves an issue contrary to its major emphasis, conventional agriculture. Despite this slow start, the SARE program has gained some impressive ground. A competitive grants program, SARE has funded 183 projects with approximately $39 million (combined federal and matching public and private money) through 1991.

Nationally, the SARE program is overseen by USDA's Cooperative State Research Service. The national office develops guidelines and distributes funds but exercises little authority. The program's structure is very decentralized. The states are divided into four regions: North Eastern, Southern, North Central, and Western. Each region has an administrative council comprised of land grant researchers, farmers, non-profit representatives, representatives of agribusiness, and various USDA agencies. The council selects a host institution and establishes goals, priorities, criteria and procedures for project selection. They appoint a regional coordinator and technical reviewers to evaluate proposals. Finally, the council makes regional decisions on project selection and funding. The program's goals are: (1) to involve farmers directly in research design and implementation, (2) to promote partnership between all interested parties, and (3) to transfer practical, reliable, and timely information to farmers on sustainable agriculture practices.[9]

SARE has defined four general project categories as eligible for funding. These are:

(1) *Educational, demonstration, or information projects* that provide training on sustainable farming practices through conferences, workshops, and preparation of educational materials, and exhibit sustainable farming practices and systems on farms;

(2) *Experimental component research projects* that focus on developing or improving a specific sustainable low-input method or practice;

(3) *Integrated-systems research* that examines synergistic and conflicting relationships among various aspects of farming operations and functionally integrates the findings of research and experience into a whole-farm context; and

(4) *Economic or social impact assessment projects* which examine the economic and/or social effects of adopting sustainable farming practices and systems.[10]

Although integrated-systems research projects are to be given highest priority, component research projects initiated by researchers at land-grant agricultural institutions are most frequently funded. This reality displays the land-grant institutions' bias for component-based research. Land-grant researchers are comfortable organizing, conducting, and analyzing such projects. They are also better rewarded for it by their institutions. Notably, social impact assessment projects have received little attention, receiving only 4.5 percent of available funds.[11] The SARE program officials are aware of this situation and many of the regional groups are working to correct this imbalance. Indeed, the Western region's "Call for Proposals" in 1992 was restricted to projects that focused solely on whole-farm or ranch systems.

Through 1992, the Southern region had funded 37 projects, second only to the North Central region's 41 projects. Some examples of project funding levels in the Southern Region between 1988 and 1992 are:

(1) Utilization of Winter Legume Cover Crops for Pest and Fertility Management in Cotton ($193,280) [LS91-40(44)];

(2) Economically Viable Production of Vegetables in the Southern Region using Low-input and Sustainable Techniques: A Data Base ($76,770) [LS91-32(185)];

(3) Enhancing Farmer Adoption and Refining of a Low-input Intercropping Soybean-Wheat System (89-55-1) ($244,883) [LS89-12];

(4) Planning Funds for a Proposal on Extending the Issue of Sustainable Agriculture to Small Farms in North Carolina, Tennessee, and Virginia ($15,000) [LS88-5].[12]

A major project was recently started in the Southern region that has a focus refreshingly unrelated to component-based research. The project will involve organizing a comprehensive analysis of the state of agriculture in the South in order to identify assets and constraints for the adoption of sustainable agricultural practices. This project aims to further define what sustainable agriculture means for the South by sampling the existing multiple regional perspectives about the subject.[13]

North Carolina farmer standing in a field of pepper plants. Credit: The Carolina Farms Stewardship Association.

Assessment of SARE

In September 1992, the General Accounting Office (GAO) published a report on SARE, its management, accomplishments, and opportunities for improvement. The GAO report concluded that the SARE program is "successful in promoting sustainable agriculture, not only through its many projects, but through its ability to bring together diverse groups within the agricultural community to communicate and work together. It has also been instrumental in encouraging research institutions to become more involved with sustainable agriculture research."[14] In addition to SARE, the USDA sponsors other programs to encourage sustainable agriculture; however, the responsibility for these programs is fragmented among nine different USDA agencies. Couple this fragmentation with USDA's lack of a stated policy regarding sustainable agriculture and the result is often duplicated efforts or conflicting goals.[15] To assist in the coordination of activities, the 1990 FACT Act mandated the formation of two councils, the National Sustainable Agriculture Advisory Council (NSAAC) and the Agricultural Council on Environmental Quality (ACEQ) to oversee and coordinate sustainable agriculture programs at USDA. As of July 1992, the ACEQ had met only to discuss organizational issues and the NSAAC had yet to meet. The GAO criticized this fragmentation at the federal level, commenting that it leaves regional authorities with little guidance as to program monitoring and project results dissemination.

The GAO correctly maintains that programs to promote sustainable agriculture within the USDA are often at odds with other USDA programs. These programs are concerned with "short-term economic considerations such as maximizing production, minimizing production costs and consumer prices, and maximizing the market share of certain agricultural commodities".[16] The programs most in conflict with the goals of the SARE program are the commodity programs. Originated in the 1930s, the commodity programs were basically income support programs designed to maintain farmer income when prices slipped below parity. They were also designed to maintain food security and manage food production. Although the commodity programs have grown more complex with every revision of the Farm Bill, they survive to this day, benefiting only the largest of farmers and costing taxpayers billions of dollars.[17] The problem with commodity programs is that they promote the kind of agricultural practices that are in direct opposition to sustainable agriculture. To participate in commodity programs a farmer must maintain a base

acreage in the program crop and not shift production of that crop off the base.[18] This discourages the practice of crop rotation, one of the basic tenets of sustainable agriculture, and encourages farmers to increase use of chemical inputs to boost yield on their base acreage.

Not all agriculture is covered by commodity programs in the U.S., only major crops like wheat, corn, soybeans, and cotton; however, it is the intensive monoculture production of crops such as these and others that leads to environmental degradation. If sustainable agriculture is to make a difference in agriculture production, the USDA needs to address these contradictory policies within their department.

The GAO also commented on the disparity between the funding Congress appropriates for SARE and the amounts requested by USDA. Congress has consistently offered more than USDA requests. The reasons underlying USDA's decision to not fully utilize funds that Congress appropriates are uncertain. It is noteworthy that USDA did not request funds for SARE for the first three years of the program. Congress appropriated $3.9 million in 1988, and $4.5 million per year for 1989 and 1990 without a funding request from USDA. In 1991, USDA finally requested only $4.5 million of a $6.7 million appropriation for that year. In sum, Congress appropriated $26.25 million for the SARE program from 1988 through 1992, while USDA requests totalled $8.9 million.

As a result of their review, the GAO developed three recommendations to increase the value of the SARE program:

> (1) "Establish a departmental policy for sustainable agriculture and direct the under- and assistant-secretaries to develop goals to implement that policy. This policy should consider sustainable agriculture's interrelationship with other departmental programs and *acknowledge the trade-offs* (emphasis added) that may be necessary as agriculture becomes more productive, competitive, and environmentally sound;
>
> (2) Ensure the active participation of the National Sustainable Agriculture Advisory Council and the Agricultural Council on Environmental Quality in coordinating sustainable agriculture programs, as required by the FACT Act; and
>
> (3) Recommend that the Secretary of Agriculture direct SARE program management to provide guidance to regional offices to improve program monitoring and wider information dissemination."[19]

Another area of concern, unaddressed in the GAO report, was the small portion of funding awarded to Impact Assessment projects, only 4.5 percent since the program's inception. These projects, as mentioned before, examine the economic and/or social effects of adopting sustainable farming practices and systems. It is likely that projects in this area would lead to an understanding of how sustainable agriculture can lead to sustainable communities. More projects in this area would also help move "quality-of-life" issues to the forefront of the discussion on sustainable agriculture, a concern of many leaders in the field. Fortunately, change is occurring in this area. A national research team was formed recently to study how well the SARE program addresses quality-of-life issues. This project was awarded $50,000 in SARE funding in 1992. Additionally, the USDA's Economic Research Service is examining the question of what might happen to the economy and environment if all farmers adopt sustainable methods. SARE has funded this project at $1.2 million for three years. If the SARE program can address quality-of-life issues in a meaningful way, then the program will achieve a better balance between its focus on the environment and its desire to consider a whole-farm, whole-community perspective.

Research in and Promotion of Sustainable Agriculture

Sustainable agricultural research, practice, and promotion is expanding across the United States. One of the more prominent institutions involved in research is the Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture at Iowa State University. The Center funded $2.3 million in research from 1987 to 1990. Michigan State University recently appropriated $3.5 million for the endowment of the Charles Stewart Mott Distinguished Professor in Sustainable Agriculture. The University of California at Davis also has a successful sustainable agriculture program. Many non-profit organizations are involved in the promotion of sustainable agriculture ranging from the Center for Rural Affairs in Nebraska to the Rodale Institute in Pennsylvania to Winrock International in Arkansas.

Here in North Carolina, the W.K. Kellogg Foundation recently awarded over $900,000 to a statewide partnership of farmers, agricultural organizations, universities, and communities to develop sustainable agriculture at four model sites across the state. The project is a coalition of seven groups including the Land Loss Prevention Project, Carolina Farm Stewardship Association, North Carolina Coalition of Farm and Rural Families, Rural Advancement Foundation International-USA, Rural Southern Voice for Peace, North Carolina State University and North Carolina A&T State University. The coalition will work to change the character of farming in the state by identifying, design-

Promoting Sustainable Agriculture

In addition to funding the SARE program, Congress could further promote sustainable agriculture by changing agricultural policy to more directly affect the survival prospects for small- and medium-size family farmers. Kenneth Robinson, in his book *Farm and Food Policies and Their Consequences* (1989), has outlined some principle policy alternatives, listed in declining order of political acceptance:

(1) "Offer more liberal credit for small-scale farmers;

(2) Fund special research and extension programs designed to favor small-scale farms;

(3) Target price-support benefits to farms below a certain size;

(4) Prohibit ownership of farm land by nonfamily corporations;

(5) Eliminate provisions in the tax laws that favor nonfarm investment in agriculture and encourage expansion by large-scale farmers;

(6) Impose an upper limit on farm size, or at least limit the area of land eligible for government-subsidized water for irrigation;

(7) Authorize the government to purchase land for resale or lease to entering farmers or small-scale operators who need to expand; and

(8) Create local land purchase review committees with the power to prohibit land transfers that lead to concentration of production on large-scale units."

The World Resources Institute has also considered how the federal government might promote a more sustainable agriculture and at the same time promote family farms. In the book *Paying the Farm Bill: U.S. Agricultural Policy and the Transition to Sustainable Agriculture* (1991), a team of researchers analyzed the changes needed to protect U.S. agricultural resources and income over the long term. They investigated two case studies that contrasted the results of several different farming strategies in Nebraska and Pennsylvania. Their analysis led them to several policy conclusions:

(1) "Farm support mechanisms create distortions that encourage dependence on chemical inputs and discourage sustainable agricultural practices;

(2) A policy of multilateral decoupling [of income support programs and commodity production] could remove the distorting influence of commodity programs;

(3) An agrichemical input tax could encourage lower levels of input use;

(4) Adaptations to baseline agricultural policy which allow flexibility in crop production could go far towards encouraging sustainable practices;

(5) When complete accounting of on-farm and off-farm environmental costs without the distorting effects of baseline agricultural policies are evaluated, sustainable farming systems are economically competitive;

(6) Shifting towards sustainable farming systems can raise agricultural productivity, reduce the fiscal costs of maintaining farm incomes, and lower environmental costs."

Policy changes such as these could greatly reduce America's expensive farm bill and assist the promotion of sustainable agriculture.

ing, and implementing sustainable agricultural systems that will benefit rural Carolinians. In addition to encouraging new farming techniques, the project should benefit selected communities by enhancing economic activity, increasing environmental stability, and promoting community development.

On a different front, research has shown that the communities of small-scale agriculturists are more socially, culturally, and politically developed. Fifty years ago, Walter Goldschmidt studied the effects of small-scale and large-scale agriculture on rural communities. His 1944 study of Arvin and Dinuba, two towns in the Central Valley of California, provides the earliest analysis of the consequences of farm size on the quality-of-life for a surrounding community. His study of socio-economic and town characteristics found a marked difference between Arvin (a town surrounded by large-scale farms) and Dinuba (a town surrounded by small-scale farms). For every characteristic studied, Dinuba was healthier than Arvin.

Arvin and Dinuba were reexamined in 1977 by Steve Peterson, a researcher with the California Department of Housing and Community Development. He found Dinuba, still surrounded by small-scale agriculture, to have a more prosperous central business district and a higher standard of living than Arvin, still surrounded by large-scale agriculture. Dinuba had more schools, playgrounds, churches, civic organizations, businesses, and higher voter participation. Fujimoto (1977) continued work in the same vein, studying the relationship between quality-of-life and control of the major agricultural resources of land and water. He studied the complexity of services as an index to the quality-of-life in 130 towns in the San Joaquin Valley

of California. His results confirmed Goldschmidt's earlier findings--small-scale agriculture is crucial to the sustainability and success of rural communities.

Conclusion

Environmental and socio-economic problems arising from the practice of conventional agriculture are occurring across the U.S. The SARE program, mandated by Congress in response to problems of conventional agricultural practices, has legitimized the need to research and adopt sustainable agricultural practices. Despite fragmentation at the federal level and a small budget, the program has been successful at promoting sustainable agriculture research in the land-grant university system and at the grassroots level with on-farm research. The program reaches the farmer who wants to learn how to practice a more sustainable form of agriculture and is creating a dialogue between two groups who do not usually share the same table--environmentalists and agribusiness. Facilitation of this dialogue is one of the most important contributions of the SARE program.

A significant aspect of the sustainable agriculture discussion that is frequently neglected is the critical importance that the practice of small-scale sustainable agriculture can have for the sustainability and viability of rural communities. Farms do not exist in a vacuum. They demand many support services. A family farm system of sustainable agriculture requires the infrastructure of a healthy, economically vibrant community. Likewise, a family farm system of sustainable agriculture can help keep rural communities strong and vital. It is an interdependent relationship. This important link should not be overlooked in future discussions of sustainable agriculture. CP

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Notes

[1] Faeth, et al. *Paying the Farm Bill.*

[2] Bird, "Sustainable Development," 6.

[3] Lockeretz, "Open Questions in Sustainable Agriculture."

[4] Allen et al., "Integrating Social, Environmental, and Economic Issues in Sustainable Agriculture," 37.

[5] Ibid., 38.

[6] "Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without comprising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs."

[7] United States General Accounting Office, "Sustainable Agriculture," 12.

[8] Beus and Dunlop, "Conventional versus Alternative."

[9] Ibid., 14.

[10] Ibid., 31.

[11] Ibid., 32.

[12] Southern Region 1993 SARE/ACE Report to Congress.

[13] The project was called "Participatory Assessment for Strategic Planning in Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education" [LS92-50] and had funding levels of $37,500 in 1992 and $90,550 for 1993.

[14] United States General Accounting Office, 40.

[15] Ibid., 23.

[16] Allen et al., 35.

[17] "According to the General Accounting Office, nearly a third of the total [farm subsidies] goes to the biggest 1% of producers," from *The Economist*, "Rural America," November 2, 1991, 23.

[18] In an effort to remedy the problems associated with commodity programs, the 1990 Farm Bill made some provisions for farmers to grow different crops on a small part of their base to promote diversification.

[19] United States General Accounting Office, 5.

Towards a Sustainable Seattle: Good Planning and Good Politics

J. Gary Lawrence

The City of Seattle is trying to shape a future which is more sustainable on a variety of measures. We want to sustain our environmental quality for both health and soul. We want to sustain our economic prosperity and maybe even obtain more clarity about the differences between standard of living and quality of life. And, we want to sustain our society--preserve what is best about us and maintain civility.

City officials have done a number of things toward this end. We have spent millions of dollars on water and air quality improvements. We have invested heavily in education. Significant portions of our tax dollars go into social programs designed to help people help themselves. We have recycling programs that are the envy of the nation. We have focused on remedying the problems we create. And yet, most of these things have been done without community agreement about what ought to be Seattle's preferred future.

When the Planning Department began doing our required Comprehensive Plan in 1990, we thought we could get to agreement about a preferred future by means of "normal planning stuff." Sustainability has, after all, many technical attributes. If we could just describe the problems clearly enough, we thought, logic would prevail and people would be willing to sacrifice self-interest for the public interest. However, as we engaged in this effort, it became clear that for Seattle, at least, sustainability is not so much a problem of knowledge or skill or resources as it is a problem of wisdom and political will.

Therefore, we rethought the problem and started to focus on values and aspirations, hopes and fears, and all sorts of messy human stuff, rather than the more logical and safer technical planning activities. Through a major public involvement effort, we came to have a much better understanding of who we are in Seattle and what might make us happy. We then used this information to define a vision of what Seattle's future could be. The Planning Department brought forward strategies based on that vision that tried to resolve some of our conflicting values. The community has largely accepted the vision.

The Washington State Growth Management Act (GMA) also altered the discretion and decision-making powers of local governments (including special districts) in Washington State. Under GMA, the City is required to adopt capital facility plans which are consistent with the Comprehensive Plan. Further, no other City expenditures can be inconsistent with the City's adopted plan. Policies adopted by the City are no longer advisory or statements of legislative intent; they create legal obligations enforceable through the courts. Once adopted, the plans can only be amended once per year and amendments are subject to the same internal and external consistency tests.

The requirements of GMA were significant, but not exclusive, in shaping the City of Seattle's development of its Comprehensive Plan. In deciding upon a scope of work and resource commitment, Seattle's Mayor and City Council decided that the State's requirements, while difficult, would not prepare us to address the full range of problems we now face or can forecast as likely in the future. We decided to treat the required

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elements of this physical plan not as ends in themselves, as we traditionally have done, but, instead, to focus them as means toward broader societal goals. We set out to use the elements of our physical plans, in combination with other initiatives, to move us away from an undesirable but probable future, including spiraling growth, unchecked suburban sprawl, loss of open space, and traffic congestion. Instead, we are moving toward a preferred future for the City and the region. Our challenge was to get agreement on a preferred future and then focus the various elements of the plan toward that end.

Taking the Lead

The City's Mayor, Norman B. Rice, instructed the Seattle Planning Department to be the lead agency in developing the City's plan. In doing so, he gave us broad powers to coordinate the planning activities of other departments within the City. He described the process of developing a Comprehensive Plan as "a moral campaign for the future of our City." His definition of a successful planning effort was very concise and very challenging. The performance of the Planning Department, he said, would be judged on our ability to "make good planning into good politics."

We started by thinking about what makes good planning. Previous Seattle planning efforts, many of which have been ignored or were irrelevant when completed, have taught us some valuable lessons about planning in Seattle. The most important of those lessons seem to be:

(1) It is very difficult to try to answer the questions "what ought we do" and "how ought we do it" at the same time;

(2) To actually solve problems you must not just react to people's behaviors but, instead, you must understand the values and beliefs that are the basis for the behaviors;

(3) It is not particularly useful to propose solutions to problems that others do not believe need to be solved; and

(4) Having "experts" involved can be a very mixed blessing.

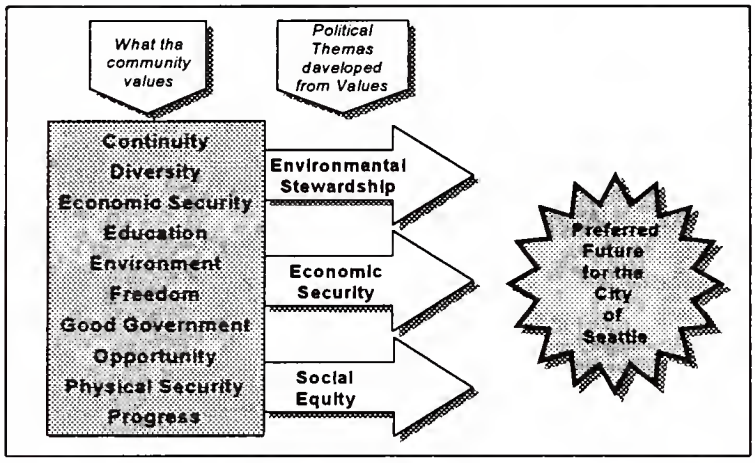
The Strategy

Taking these lessons to heart, we divided development of our comprehensive plan into three components with a strong emphasis on engaging a broad community spectrum in the dialogue. The first component, started in 1991, consisted of the Planning Department staff setting out to learn what Seattle's citizens valued about their communities and what they considered the most important issues in preserving their quality of life. The next step was for city officials and staff, with public input, to develop a vision of a preferred future for the City; the vision was designed to solve the community-identified problems in a manner that would be consistent with their values. The final step was the development of specific implementation strategies, which include evaluation tools to ensure the community is moving toward the preferred vision and provide benchmarks by which Seattle's citizens can measure our collective progress.

The first step, value identification, was accomplished through the most extensive public involvement process the City had ever undertaken. In addition to the traditional steering committees and community meetings, we made extensive use of focus groups, radio, TV, direct mail, telephone surveys, newspapers, and other forms of outreach to try to engage those people who do not traditionally involve themselves in planning. In past planning efforts, we have had little difficulty in reaching that small group of "professional citizens" who seem to be involved in everything. We have, however, struggled to reach representatives of minority communities, the young, single parents, renters, and the poor. Therefore, we undertook special efforts to gain participation of these groups, including the translation of our documents into seven different languages (87 different languages or dialects are spoken in the Seattle Public School system) and recruitment of community representatives to work within individual communities. We went so far as to hire high school students to do outreach within the schools as well as to translate the plan into "teen speak."

It is important to note that the values expressed by Seattle's various communities confirmed some things we thought we knew but also opened our minds to some surprises. For example, city officials knew that within our community "environmental stewardship" was highly valued. We were surprised, however, at the extent to which the environment showed up more like a religious value rather than as an attribute of community. Among the Native American groups indigenous to the Pacific Northwestern area of the U.S., the environment was referred to as a "thou" rather than an "it." It is much like that for the existing population. Attacks on the environment are perceived to be the same as attacks on the person rather than something that is disassociated with the self.

We were also surprised at the extent to which the community feels that the "American Dream" has been betrayed and how much our community wants issues of "economic security" addressed. Most of us have



Values expressed by Seattle citizens.

been raised to believe that anything is possible for us, if we just decide to do it. We believe that resource limitations are something that others need to worry about, and that our children will, of course, enjoy the same high standard of living that we have had. The notion of limits, and, therefore, the need to make some hard choices for ourselves and our community is very difficult to accept.

Another surprise was how often people wanted to talk about "freedom." Different groups linked freedom to a variety of issues. One concept of freedom relates to fear of crime and personal harm. Concerns that a neighborhood isn't safe makes people feel trapped in their homes or makes them feel as though parts of their community are off limits to them. Women in particular often make choices about the use of public transit based upon their perception of risk in the walk from the bus stop to home. If they can't afford a car and if they are afraid to use transit, their freedom of movement is effectively diminished. More explicit were freedom issues related to the automobile. The advertising industry has done a very good job of convincing most people in this community that there is a direct relationship between being able to drive where one wants when one wants and being free.

The process of exploring the community's values led city officials to develop "The Framework Policies." These policies are grounded in the core community values of environmental stewardship, social equity, and economic security, and they establish goals for the community to work towards in a manner consistent with their values.

The next step was to identify which specific problems need to be solved. City officials and staff used a variety of mechanisms to identify the issues to be addressed. Seattle was the first city in North Amercia to do a full Comparative Environmental Risk to Human Health analysis based upon the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency model. Through this analysis, we learned that the number one environmental issue our plan needed to address was air quality degradation associated with vehicle emissions. The second most serious problem was water quality degradation associated with auto related pollutants and increased surface water run-off created by sprawl. Noise ranked third along with indoor air quality.

We also utilized surveys, focus groups, random sampling, and community meetings to find out what was bothering Seattle's citizens the most. Lack of quality in the school system, traffic congestion, concerns about crime, loss of "family wage" jobs, and environmental decline were the most often mentioned, with schools and traffic being a focus at every meeting. As is true for any urban area, many problems were identified. These were the most prominent.

We finally had the two products necessary to define a preferred future for the City--knowledge of what the community values and which problems they believe need to be solved. These are critical to understanding what broad-based political agreements are possible. Without the broad-based political agreements, i.e., community ownership of the vision and the related goals, the plan would have little relevance over time.

Values in Conflict

To continue to stimulate community conversation and involvement, to encourage constructive conflict, and to see if agreement was possible, we engaged the community in a new debate. While developing the draft plan and strategy in 1993, we held a series of forums with the community and the region. It became very clear, not only to us but also to the citizens of the region, that conflicts in the community's values created significant barriers to problem solving.

For example, given the region's development patterns over the past two decades and economic restructuring, which has moved us away from dependence on resource industries, employment is no longer concentrated in the central city. The result of sprawling residential development, increases in multiple wage earners per household, and an increase in the number of careers each of us will have in our lifetime, has been that the automobile is the primary source of mobility and is critical to the individual's ability to gain economic security. However, as much as we value economic security, we also value environmental preservation. A major conflict exists because the means by which we

presently maintain independence and economic security is also the principle cause of environmental decline.

However, we also realized that environmental preservation may in fact be the key to future economic security. According to *FORTUNE* magazine's survey of the best places in America for international business, the City of Seattle and the central Puget Sound region's advantages in a global economy are: our environmental quality, our transportation system (good port, rail access to the rest of the country and a good airport), and a skilled work force. Continued degradation of the environment will cause our region to lose one of its competitive advantages.

This combination of values and problems, like many other combinations, creates some very vexing dilemmas. If economic security means we must focus upon environmental preservation, and if environmental preservation means we must reduce the use of the automobile, and if reducing the use of the automobile means reducing economic security, how do we proceed? Working through this puzzle and many more like it, with individuals and community groups, led the planning department to develop a comprehensive plan for the city entitled "Toward a Sustainable Seattle." More commonly, the press and the public refer to this plan as the "Urban Village Strategy."

Urban Villages

The Urban Village concept is the key component in shaping future growth in Seattle. It identifies the neighborhood as the basic building block of the city. The Urban Village strategy proposes to direct new development to create focused, mixed-use, pedestrian-friendly, and transit-connected centers or villages. Specifically, it is designed to focus growth to reinforce existing neighborhood centers, enabling people to live near shopping, transit stops, and where they work, reducing their dependence on the private automobile and meeting housing needs for a diverse population by creating higher density options. The strategy also directs public investments into amenities that create a sense of neighborhood and are shared by neighborhood residents, protects neighborhoods from changes that would change their character, and seeks to continue large-scale public involvement by citizens in shaping their environment and fostering a liveable region.

The Urban Village strategy, the basis for our Comprehensive Plan, is also about behavioral change. At its core are two objectives: one is to make it easier for people to change their behaviors by providing them alternatives which do less harm but appeal to their core values, and the other is to influence the marketplace so that people make more money doing things that are good for society and less money doing things that harm us.

It has become quite apparent through this planning process that no set of laws or regulations will cure our ills. At the root of each issue, be it social, economic, or environmental, are the discrete choices each of us makes on a daily basis.

Achieving mass behavioral change is difficult under any circumstances. Given our values, property rights laws, and political traditions emphasizing the rights of the individual, forcing people to change is out of the question. When pushed, people here believe it is their job to push back. If pushed too hard, they will put someone in office who won't push them at all.

For example, using knowledge we have learned about our community's values, we now know why people get so upset when we tell them they should drive less or not at all. They don't hear us asking them to incur some inconvenience on behalf of societal environmental goals, instead they hear us telling them that the government is taking away what they consider to be a basic freedom. If people in this community are to change their behaviors to meet their environmental values, then we need to find substitutes for the sense of freedom they get with their cars.

Getting the marketplace to change its behavior may be even more difficult. In the housing market, the developers extrapolate from existing trends and conclude that the housing product people want is the product that they are already building. Even though we have good housing preference studies demonstrating that this is not necessarily true, the region's financial and development interests continue down the same path. Unless the government can affect profits, either by writing down the cost of development that achieves our goals and/or increasing the cost of development that doesn't, the market will not change its behavior. In our country, the needs of the market almost always overwhelm public policy. And in our region, a lack of change in housing development patterns means continued environmental decline.

So, what are we doing about this? We created the Urban Village Strategy--a set of policies, strategies, and investment practices which should result in denser, more walkable neighborhoods with more flexible and personalized public transit. As outlined above, Urban Villages focus on making more compact and less consumptive living more attractive by providing better amenities like parks, libraries, community centers, transportation facilities, cultural amenities, and education infrastructure. We are increasing the densities for jobs and housing allowed within the village centers, and

Designating Urban Villages

Urban Villages are identified and designated at three scales of development:

Urban Center Villages

These are intended to accommodate a broad mix of activity and will receive most of the future residential and employment growth. Thus, they will be the most densely developed portions of the city.

Hub Urban Villages

These follow Urban Center Villages in intensity of development, with concentrated mixed-use cores, diverse residential areas, and excellent transit access.

Residential Urban Villages

These are primarily compact residential neighborhoods with a small, locally oriented business district.

Within the remaining areas of the city outside Urban Villages, locations identified as Neighborhood Anchors are designated to provide a transit and service focus for surrounding, low-density residential areas. In the long-term future, some additional concentration of low-density residential development may be desirable in these surrounding areas, but provisions for such changes would only occur through a neighborhood planning process.

reducing the development capacity outside the centers. We are making the environmental assessment process a public cost within the villages and a private cost outside the villages. We are changing the uses allowed within the villages so that, like it was 30 years ago or so, housing will be above shops. And finally, we are increasing the public share of the cost of basic infrastructure in the villages and increasing the private share outside.

Planning or Anti-planning?

Some refer to our Comprehensive Plan as "neo-traditional" planning. I prefer Andres Duany's reference to our plan as "anti-planning." He refers to our efforts that way because we are attempting to counter at least 30 years of practice that has devastated our cities and spawned destruction of much of our once abundant environmental quality. And we, planners and community alike, have done this with the best of intentions as we work to "give people what they want."

In Seattle, we were responding to every problem by giving people more of what they said they wanted (and often more than what they have asked for). When the roads were full and citizens complained of congestion, we built wider roads rather than talk about what alternatives might meet mobility needs. When we were out of water, we seldom questioned how much water we should be using; we just built another dam or drilled another well. When we started to feel a little cramped, we invested in freeways to open up new land for development. As planners, we have compartmentalized our thinking, focused on specialization and expertise, and, as a result, have possibly lost sight of life's complexities. We risk forgetting the importance of understanding the relationships between the physical form (land-use, transportation, housing, community facilities, utilities, and design) and the kinds of behaviors that form encourages or discourages. We seemed to have lost sight of the reasons cities exist--to serve the needs of people.

We felt this was not the good planning that our city needed. Which brings us back to the charge Mayor Rice gave us when we started the whole comprehensive planning process: "make good planning into good politics." How does good planning become good politics? I am still trying to figure this out. It is unlikely that I will ever be able to say with confidence that I know "the answer." However, some of the key ingredients have become clear. They are:

(1) Good planning is about people, not things. If it isn't directed toward giving people the opportunity to live fuller and more satisfying lives, then we may be missing the point of all of this.

(2) Good planning is about ends, not means. For example, planning a transit system (a means toward mobility) without considering the societal ends to be served may not lead us toward increasing the quality of our society.

(3) Good planning addresses what is, not what one might wish were true. In order for plans to be useful guides toward problem solving, they must be based on a clear understanding of the nature of the community, both good and bad.

(4) Good planning must be focused on success for the society, not winning for the individual. Recognizing that self-interest drives much of our individual behaviors is not the same thing as abandoning the notion of a higher public interest to be served through our plans. Alexander Hamilton, in *The Federalist Papers*, gave definition to our role. "Why has government been instituted at all?" he asked. "Because the passions of men will not

conform to the dictates of reason and justice without constraint."

(5) Good planning embraces complexity, it doesn't avoid it. Most people want problems and solutions discussed with clarity and common sense. That is not the same thing as being simplistic. People's lives are very complex and they know, intuitively, that the rest of the world is pretty complex as well. The short-term benefit to be gained by framing problems and opportunities simplistically are far outweighed by the long-term costs associated with a loss of confidence in government institutions as people realize we have "sheltered" them from the truth.

(6) Good planning must recognize that myths and beliefs are much more powerful than facts. I have never encountered a fact that could stand up to a really good myth, at least in the short-term. As we attack the problems in our communities we need to think about creating myths that encourage positive behavioral change if we are to compete with the myths created by those who are profiting from the status quo.

Here in Seattle, the State Growth Management Act gave us a new impetus to revitalize the planning process. As noted by Mayor Norman B. Rice in his letter at the beginning of *An Issues Guide to the Mayor's Recommended Comprehensive Plan*, "the planning process has become a vehicle for us to make basic choices about how we can achieve our fundamental goals." The Seattle City Council adopted a comprehensive plan, "Toward a Sustainable Seattle" on July 25, 1994. There is not unanimity over the preferred future we have chosen or over the strategies we are going to use to achieve that future, but a vast majority support the decisions made. We know that things will change and the plan will need to adapt to those changes as new information becomes available. But, we now have a goal of sustainability and, with that goal, we can harness our resources to help make Seattle an even better city. CP

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Sustaining Traditional Sea Island Communities

A *Carolina Planning* interview with representatives of the Sea Islands Preservation Project, St. Helena Island, South Carolina, March 1994.

Nina Morais, Joseph McDomick, and Sarah Bobrow

"The Sea Islands off the coast of South Carolina and Georgia are being overtaken by rapid, poorly planned development. One casualty is the islands' fragile environment. Another is the islands' unique African-American culture. Sprawling suburbs and exclusive resort "plantations" are quickly displacing the islands' vulnerable black communities. For Sea Island blacks [known as the Gullah], whose distinctive language, music, cuisine, and crafts make them the most African of all African-Americans, the process of development has rightly been called 'cultural genocide'.

"Preservation efforts on the Sea Islands can best be understood in light of the region's unique history. Just after the Civil War, St. Helena and several other islands in South Carolina were the only place in the South where large numbers of former slaves were able to purchase land. To former slaves, land meant just compensation for centuries of unpaid labor. It also meant some measure of economic independence, and therefore some measure of genuine freedom. Black land ownership, with its echoes of justice and freedom, soon spread throughout the Sea Islands. For the next century, isolated from the mainland, island residents wove African and American influences into a colorful, distinctive language and culture.

"Over the last several decades, however, Sea Island communities have been struggling to survive. A number of islands are now exclusive resorts, others are becoming suburbs, and all are subject to the cancerous growth of multi-lane highways and commercial strips. This development has taken a severe toll on the islands' fragile ecology: nearly half of South Carolina's shellfish beds are now closed due to polluted runoff. In addition, native islanders are often forced to sell family land against their will. They are also increasingly unable to pursue traditional occupations, like oystering or basket-weaving, that depend on clean water and ready access to natural resources.

"Developers argue that, in exchange, the islanders now have more economic opportunities. For most people this is simply not true. Between 1980 and 1990, for every job taken by an African-American on the South Carolina coast, five to six new jobs went to whites. In 1990, the income of African Americans on islands affected by resort development was still about one third that of whites. It is perfectly clear that those who pay the steepest price for development have virtually nothing to gain."[1]

In light of the above, the Sea Islands Preservation Project was initiated in 1992 to sustain the traditional Sea Island communities. The following interview with Project staff was conducted by *Carolina Planning* editor Kirsten Springer in March 1994.

Nina Morais *is the Project Director of the Sea Islands Preservation Project. She formerly worked as an organizer in minority communities for the NAACP Legal Defense Fund. Ms. Morais has a law degree from Yale University and a masters degree in history from Harvard University.* ***Joseph McDomick*** *is the Program Director for the Project. He has worked for Penn Center since 1964, specializing in black land retention. He is also a Beaufort County Magistrate. Mr. McDomick received a B.S. from Southern University in agricultural education.* ***Sarah Bobrow*** *is the Economic Development Coordinator for the Project. She is a former economic development planner, community organizer, fundraiser, and lender for indigenous communities producing goods that add value to natural resources. Ms. Bobrow received her masters degree in community and regional planning from the University of New Mexico.*

Carolina Planning: What is the Sea Islands Preservation Project?

Nina Morais: The Project is a collaboration among three organizations: the Penn Center, the South Carolina Coastal Conservation League, and the Neighborhood Legal Assistance Program. Penn Center was founded during the Civil War as the first school for freed blacks and carries with it a history of pride, self reliance, and self determination. Its mission has always been to help the black community control its own destiny. This Project continues in that spirit. In many ways we are recapturing the history of 130 years and we are lucky to have Penn Center as a foundation on which to build.

The South Carolina Coastal Conservation League (SCCCL) is the second partner in this collaboration. It is a rapidly growing, relatively new environmental advocacy group which is addressing many environmental issues on the coast, from water quality to forest management. SCCCL has decided to focus on land use planning because they believe that the single most serious threat to the environment on the coast is poorly planned sprawled development. Sprawl affects the quality of the air and water as well as the affordability of housing. The third partner is the Neighborhood Legal Assistance Program which assists and supervises the Project on legal matters.

The first step in the Project was to start a school, the Penn School for Preservation, to familiarize community activists and key local government officials with environmental and community economic development principles, and to teach leadership skills. Twenty-five of the 40 participants are local community leaders, ten are community leaders from other communities in South Carolina and Georgia, and five are local planning staff and council members. One-third of the curriculum is devoted to land use planning and we are exploring a number of tools, such as extremely low density zoning, cluster zoning, and sewer service boundaries. One-third of the curriculum is devoted to community economic development, geared towards cultural and environmental preservation and one third of the curriculum is leadership skill-building. Although many of the people on the island are deeply concerned about preservation, they may lack certain skills, such as public speaking and negotiation, that enable them to be effective political actors.

The school's twelve-day program is taught on weekends over the course of five months. The program has taken off and the participants are eager to come back to the school. Each student is working in one of eight homework groups. Most of the eight groups are investigating sustainable development strategies. For example, if St. Helena's Island is to survive as a rural place, agriculture must be easier for small farmers. One group is tackling that issue and has chosen to focus on the restoration of an old cannery and the restoration of a building up the road from the Penn Center which we hope will be used for fresh local produce and for local preserved foods. The opening of a cannery and market would also increase the viability of small farms and fishing businesses on the Island.

Another homework group is working on zoning. St. Helena Island's zoning will be revised this year under state law. The zoning group has been working to outline the tools they want used. The two goals of the zoning group are to preserve the rural character of the Island and to preserve the character of the commercial area known as the "Corner Community". We are beginning to work on what will be a long-term effort to restore many of the buildings in that community and transform it into a center for sustainable development. Each building will contain something that increases the capacity of the community members to make a living while preserving the culture and environment.

The second program area is Legal Education and Assistance. This area was established to respond to the problem that many native landowners are losing their land because they do not understand their legal rights. My colleague, Joe McDomick, works with native landowners individually and gives workshops on strategies for retaining their land. In 1993, for example, he held 550 counseling sessions with local people, assisting a significant segment of St. Helena's population of 5,400.

The third program area is Sustainable Economic Development.

Sarah Bobrow: We are in the planning stages of establishing a community development corporation (CDC) that will seed other efforts.

NM: We are planning to restore the cannery and start an agricultural cooperative. Also, following models now in place across the country, we hope to open a folk art center where people will be trained in vanishing sea island crafts. The center would also serve as a market for the crafts. Other such centers employ approximately 700 people. These are our long-term goals. In the next year, we hope to determine the staff and financing structure needed to start some of these projects. The community development corporation will be the vehicle for raising money and training

people in entrepreneurial skills. We are also investigating acquiring and/or renovating several of the buildings in the Corners Community. Once we have the structure in place, we will be able to start some of the specific business projects.

SB: The CDC will also have a micro-loan fund for start-up businesses. The loans would be used to help people create the kind of businesses that can be used in the outlets being opened. For example, concerning the food processing facility, people would use loan funds to purchase equipment upfront and when the equipment was sold, the loan would be paid back. The loan fund would be targeted at value-added businesses --to add value to the resources here, agriculture and crafts. Once the food processing facility is up and running, we hope to have a licensed kitchen to be used cooperatively for bottling, jarring, and canning seafoods such as smoked oysters, smoked clams, and seafood sauce. The possibilities are endless.

NM: Once you have an economy that depends on the natural resource base, it is much easier to make political arguments for protecting that base. Through the Penn School for Preservation, we are attempting to envision a future for St. Helena which has a somewhat different economy than the sea islands that have been overtaken by suburban or resort development. Our political arguments for changing the zoning to preserve the agricultural character will be strengthened if we have a viable economy based on small scale farming. This is one piece to the puzzle.

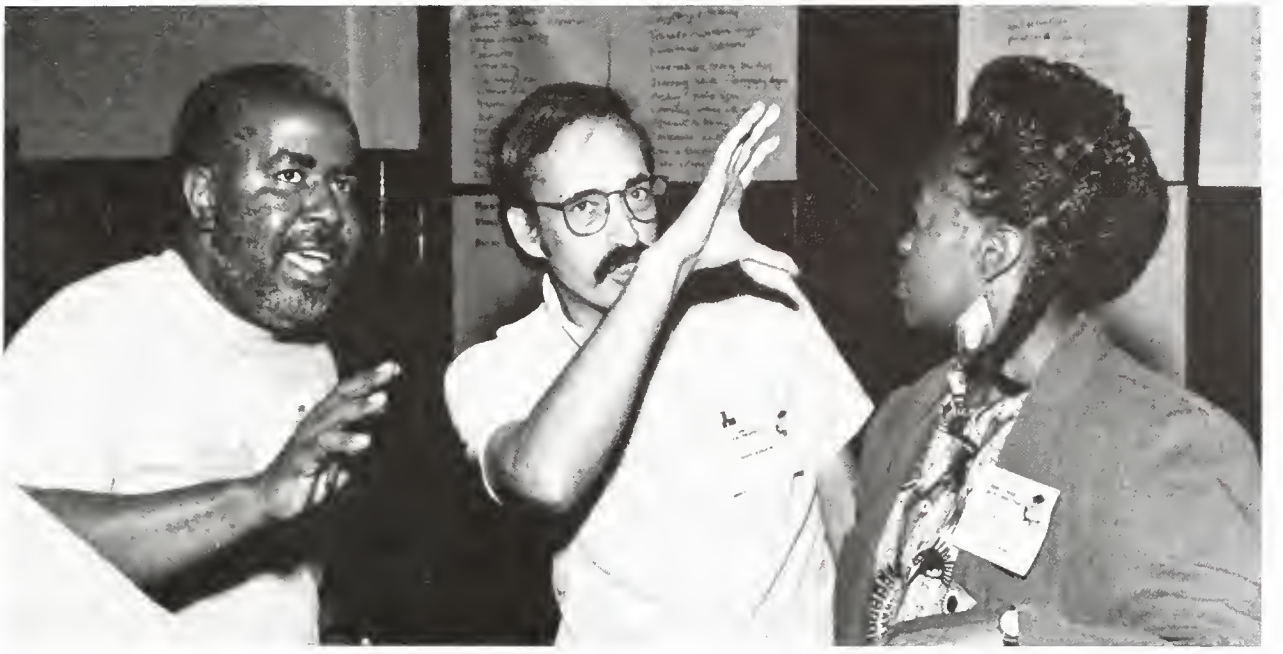
The fourth program area is Policy Reform and Coalition Building. Policy reform includes everything else we do. Currently, we are reevaluating the zoning on St. Helena Island and nearby Lady's Island. One issue we are working on is the state's agricultural use exemption. A bill is before the state legislature which would dramatically restrict the agricultural use exemption which offers a lower tax rate for people using their land for agricultural purposes. The exemption allows people who want to farm their land or grow timber to do so without being taxed at the market value for their property, which can be very high if you live on an island such as Hilton Head. This allows small farmers to remain on their land although they are cash poor. Most states have an agricultural use exemption; however, South Carolina is attempting to exclude small landowners from the exemption. They would be taxed for the market value of their property if the bill passes. Although the purpose of the bill is to save the state money, passage would have devastating consequences for small farmers. Therefore, we are talking with state legislators and we are giving them basic information so they understand the bill would not accomplish its intended purpose, and it would make it impossible for some small farmers to remain on their land.

CP: What type of zoning are you advocating?

NM: At this point, we have a list of tools and 40 people who are excited about seeing this transpire. There is a long and arduous political process of building allies that we are about to embark on, and, for us to settle on a very specific plan would be counterproductive. We need to make compromises with the people who have interests overlapping with our own. The county will review our vision in the fall. Until then, we will be identifying allies and negotiating to determine what we can get. Currently, most of the Island is zoned two units per acre. This type of zoning is called a "residential agricultural district". However, there is nothing agricultural about this type of zoning. It is a welcome mat for suburban development. As currently zoned, the Island could hold 90,000 people. The current population is approximately 5,000 people. Along the South Carolina Coast, there is no agricultural preservation district or open space cluster zoning. These are the tools that have been used successfully in other communities, for example, rural communities in Maryland and Virginia that do not want to become suburbs of Washington, D.C. However, these communities are predominantly white, well-educated communities that have availed themselves of these tools. What is interesting here is we have people with little formal education, but they understand the issue perfectly well and they know what they want for their community. We think we will have success here.

SB: Along with zoning, there are other tools to preserve the land, for example, land trusts. We expect that a land trust on St. Helena would buy an easement on the land. It is possible to stipulate in the easement the type of farming that can be done on the land to ensure that the land is being farmed sustainably. Whether such a stipulation would be used would be decided by the residents over time.

NM: We will be looking into a variety of purchase strategies. These type of strategies would ultimately require government funding. We will be working with the county on these issues when we go through the zoning process. This is a decade-long plan. St. Helena



Participants in the Penn School for Preservation get excited about zoning: Rev. Ervin Greene, Mr. Barry Augustin, Ms. Sara Wilson. Credit: John Barton.

Island could become a national model for a sustainable community.

Joseph McDomick: We have a lot of people in the Penn School for Preservation that have only a vague idea about what zoning is. In class, students take a piece of property, consider it, and decide how they would like to see it zoned. The students actually plan out the use of a piece of property. They have never done that before.

NM: Many Island residents have a strong gut sense that they love their community and they want to see it preserved, but they may not be fully equipped to achieve their goal. Once you start learning the terms and you start learning what other communities have done to preserve themselves, you can go into, for example, your county council and request that specific actions be taken and explain what other communities are doing. What the School is all about is making its students more effective political actors. They have never lacked for enthusiasm or clarity of what they wanted. What they have lacked is some of the terminology, and an awareness of how to achieve their goals. That is what we give the students.

SB: The projects the students have selected have played into that because they are starting to dream about what they want to create, and that adds to their wanting to ensure that it is going to be able to happen. At the last session of the school we are going to decide which projects we will start with, and the first will be the CDC. People are behind their ideas and they want to see them carried through. That adds an extra impetus to all the planning.

CP: How is the Project funded?

NM: We are currently funded by a dozen private foundations. But now that we are moving into economic development, we hope to receive funding from government sources, and possibly from corporate sponsors.

SB: We are applying for funding under one of Clinton's new initiatives, the Enterprise Communities and Empowerment Zones Program. If awarded an Enterprise Community designation, we would receive three million dollars. The idea behind the Program is to put in place community-based planning; the basis of the application is a strategic plan that is to come from the community. In addition, sustainable development is one of the key principles of the initiative. It is exciting that the government is advocating this type of planning and this kind of process. It will get people who don't do community-based planning to think about it. We are a small area so that will hurt our chances but we will emphasize the fact that we are attempting to establish a model here that can be replicated on other sea islands. In addition, we will be applying for funding through ISTEA for enhancements of some of the buildings in the Corner Community. We are requesting

money to renovate the building that will be used for the agricultural co-op and marketing outlet, which was the first African-American agricultural co-op in the state.

CP: What is unique about the Gullah culture you are trying to preserve?

NM: The Gullah are among the most spiritual people in the world; they make among the most beautiful music in the world; and their values of family and community are most probably like none other you will find in this country. Their relation to the natural world is different than modern America's. We have much to learn from them. It is worth working to preserve.

As a personal matter, I think it is vital to preserve cultures which are different from mainstream American culture because most of us are fairly similar to one another. I would say the same thing for Native American cultures, Quakers, Amish people, and other small societies that have survived in America. These are great gifts to us in the late twentieth century; if we eliminate them as cultures, we will have nothing left as a contrast to ourselves.

JM: The language, the people, the food are what makes the area unique. This is probably the closest connection you are going to find anywhere in America to Africa. People here have tried to maintain their African heritage: close-knit families, older people seeing after the younger kids, traditional foods you find in Africa, and most of all their language, the rolling sounds that most folks don't understand. People say "that's bad English."

CP: Are you aware of similar efforts in sustainable development?

NM: There are very few other projects in the country that we have found that are doing anything remotely like this. One of them is the Conservation Fund's project in Tyrell County, North Carolina. It bears a strong resemblance to this project. Another is located on the eastern shore of Virginia and the Nature Conservancy is involved with it. Another is in Willapa Bay, Washington, pioneered by an organization called Ecotrust.

Right now we are dreaming. The only thing we have up and running is the school. The best part is on Sunday mornings, when community members come in and lead devotional services before the regular classes to get people in the spirit, reading scripture, praying, and singing spirituals. It gets people excited. If you are going to dream this big, you have to have a lot of faith. What powers the school is not only a sense of purpose and clarity about where we want to go, but faith that we are going to get there together.

CP: How did you get started?

NM: As you can imagine, this is not the first time exciting things have happened at Penn Center. The Civil War was one period of time when the eyes of the nation were on this Island, as were the 1960's.

JM: During the 1960's, people were looking for leadership, especially at the local level; they were saying "you have always been out there leading us." So, we started running a community development training program. We brought in people from eight states and taught them here for seven weeks through intensive classroom-type training. Then we went back with them to their local communities for seven weeks to help them organize. Also, Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and his group would come here each year and hold their training and planning sessions. The midwife training institute also held its annual workshops here.

NM: The reason the Penn School for Preservation is working is because it is sitting on top of 130 years of extraordinary history, and people in the school know that history. People here believe they are going to make history, and if they believe it, they will, they have before.

JM: During the 1960's people were protesting, and organizing and picketing. People wanted to be involved. The only way they could make people listen was to go out and picket the welfare office, picket the Piggly Wiggly, picket the department stores. We tried to help people to understand that they have a right to be involved. We continue to do that. But we are doing it from a different perspective: planning and zoning. This is very important. Back then we didn't think about those kind of things. But now it is a new era and we have changed our strategy. We know we are losing land; we've been talking about that for 20 plus years. We need to try to preserve it, retain it. But how do we make it work? This is what people are talking about at the school. CP

Note

[1] Sea Island Preservation Project. January 1994.

State Models for Sustainable Development

Ylang Nguyen

Communities throughout the United States and around the world are taking a new approach toward solving their economic, environmental, social, and financial problems. Instead of assigning problems to isolated parts of government, the issues are increasingly being explored in an integrated manner, bringing together all concerned departments. Instead of maximizing current consumption with extractive, polluting industries and impersonal, inefficient governments, communities are striving to transform themselves to prosper in the long-run. It begins with the bringing together of all interests--business, government, environmental, labor, and public--to find new ways to operate which meet the needs of both the present and future generations.

In 1972, the United Nations held the Stockholm Conference on Human Environment, which recognized the need for sustainable development. Subsequently, the United Nations formed the Environment Protection Commission, resulting in discussions concerning environmental protection and resource management on both the international and national levels. But it has only been in the past five years that the United States has witnessed solid advances towards fulfilling sustainable development goals. In particular, following the release of *Agenda 21* from the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development held in Rio de Janeiro in June 1992, President Clinton established the President's Council on Sustainable Development (PCSD) in 1993. Consequently, sustainable development has become an increasingly visible policy priority for nearly all levels of government in the United States.

Aside from the formation of the PCSD, little has happened in the area of sustainable development at the federal level; rather, the states have begun to pave the way for innovative sustainable development initiatives and policies. However, in order for states to create a successful sustainable development plan which will evolve into solid policy, there are some fundamental steps which must be followed. Unfortunately, all too often one or more of these steps is neglected, resulting in an ineffective, noncomprehensive strategy. But what is required of a successful sustainable development plan? While there are no hard and fast rules, and while there is no one perfect plan, some elements remain essential. This article seeks to address all those challenges which present themselves to states developing sustainability strategies. Four states, Minnesota, Kentucky, Maine, and Virginia, have enthusiastically taken on the challenges; consequently, they have made significant advances in creating a sustainable future for their state. Nevertheless, although leaders in sustainable development, these states, as well as others, need to accomplish much more in order to achieve sustainability.

A State-Level Model for Sustainable Development

First, people must recognize that if conventional indicators of economic growth, such as consumption and spending, continue to be used and desired, the quality of life of all beings will be compromised in the long-run. People must realize that the need for inte-

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grating economic development, environmental protection, and social needs is an immediate and urgent one. Education and understanding remain a crucial step in meeting this need and many states have willingly taken up the task, as evidenced by the increasing number of states hosting conferences in hopes of raising awareness and building consensus on the issue. However, some of these conferences are composed solely of government leaders and experts in the private sector. Without the full understanding and support of all the interested parties, including the general public, the challenge of achieving sustainable development becomes more difficult.

The next step involves researching the environmental, economic, and social conditions of each state to determine its needs. Is the consumption of natural resources exceeding replenishment? What are the levels of air, soil, and water quality? Is a particular community overly dependent on a single industry? Rural states which use extensive irrigation systems and a large quantity of chemical fertilizers have different needs than heavily populated states which experience chronic transportation problems. Thus, in order for a state to develop a comprehensive strategy, it must understand its present and be able to anticipate its future.

Concurrent with this research, a state should begin formulating its vision towards sustainability. This vision will generate and prioritize specific goals and develop timetables in which to achieve them. All issues, environmental, economic, and social, as well as educational, must be integrated. In addition to serving as an educational tool, state conferences have proven to be fairly effective in formulating a vision and recommendations which reflect the needs and wants of all parties. Round table formats have also had success in bringing all interested parties into the discussion.

An on-going outreach mechanism, providing both background about sustainable development and updates of state activity, should be in place and easily accessible to the public. Education and full participation of all people provide the needed support, research provides the data, and a vision provides definite goals, but all this is futile without implementation. Positive changes in the way government and industry do business, demonstration projects to prove that sustainability can work, and issue-specific legislation nestled within a larger vision of sustainable development are the keys to creating a sustainable future. However, if and when implementation occurs, the task of ensuring sustainable development is not yet complete. Indices and benchmarks must also be developed in order to adequately monitor sustainable development activity.

Minnesota

In January, 1993, Governor Arne Carlson, the Environmental Quality Board, and the Commissioner of Trade and Economic Development introduced the *Minnesota Sustainable Development Initiative*, an ambitious, year-long effort to develop recommendations to create a sustainable future for Minnesota. Unlike other initiatives which have been vague or included only select participants, Minnesota's plan distinguished itself by specifically creating fact-finding missions and strategy-development tasks for seven Initiative Teams to work on. The ultimate goal of each team was to provide recommendations which in turn would be applied or made into new legislation.

Representatives from business, academia, government, environmental, and citizen groups comprised each of the seven teams. Led by two co-chairs, one each from the environmental and economic sectors, the teams dealt with issues important to the state: agriculture, energy, forestry, manufacturing, minerals, recreation, and settlement. Teams met monthly to discuss issues and problems, recognize innovations, and develop strategies which could be implemented toward sustainable development. Three plenary sessions were conducted to discuss overlapping issues and to develop an integrated set of recommendations. According to the guidelines established for all teams, meetings were open to the public and the draft recommendations, presented in December 1993, were made available for public comment at the February 1994 Minnesota Congress on Sustainable Development.

The recommendations addressed such topics as full-cost accounting, integrated landuse, financial incentives and disincentives, and education and information collection. All recommendations have been proposed to the Minnesota legislature in hopes of bringing about some change in the way Minnesota looks at its economic development and environmental protection.

The Minnesota Sustainable Development Initiative certainly made significant strides towards fulfilling the goal of sustainable development; unfortunately, its efforts ended with the final meeting, held in November 1993. Essentially, the study was a "one-shot deal," says John Green, a member of the Minerals Initiatives team, who described the overall experience as beneficial in that it heightened awareness among participants and set forth many positive recommendations which have a good chance of being implemented. However, like many recommendations offered for legislation, Green noted that some are too complicated and too "sticky" even to be touched.

Ideally, the initiative should have included a lobbying mechanism to ensure that the legislature would recog-

nize and consider the proposed recommendations. Or, at a minimum, some sort of lobbying effort should have been included within the list of recommendations. Whether the objectives of the initiative were achieved or not will be revealed in future legislation. However, so far things have already started on the wrong foot. In late May 1994, the Governor vetoed parts of a bill which would have set aside funding to further the efforts of the initiative. This is an all too frequent example of progressive ideas falling short of their potential.

Kentucky

Following up on the Earth Summit held in Rio de Janeiro in 1992, Governor Brereton Jones and Dr. Lilialyce Akers initiated a conference similar to Minnesota's to discuss sustainability issues for the state of Kentucky; however, interest was so great that the conference soon expanded to a national level. Thus, in May 1993, Kentucky hosted *From Rio to the Capitols: State Strategies for Sustainable Development*. Government officials, citizens, and members of non-governmental organizations and business convened to learn about sustainable development. The conference certainly succeeded in overcoming the first obstacle by pushing dialogue on sustainable development out onto the table. Participants addressed important topics such as how government policies can better reconcile economics and the environment and how communities can encourage business to adopt clean technologies.

A speaker addresses a small business panel at Kentucky's Rio to the Capitols conference. Credit: Charles Pierce

The conference included regional forums, composed of participants hailing from regions with similar economic, geographical, and social conditions, which served to compare and discuss strategies, experiences, and impressions on sustainable development on a more micro-level. The regional forums also addressed the specific needs of the various regions and recommended actions to respond to them. The conference was so well received that a similar one will be held in Arizona next year.

The conference prompted the Kentucky Cabinet of Economic Development and Cabinet of Natural Resources and Environmental Protection to co-sponsor the Sustainability Round Table Information Forum. Over fifty leaders from various sectors came together to discuss ways to integrate economic development, environmental protection, and social needs for Kentucky. The participants also examined existing Round Table processes in order to select one as a model for Kentucky. As a result, the Sustainable Kentucky Round Table was created, based on British Columbia's Round Table and the *Minnesota Sustainable Development Initiative* discussed above. Patricia Scruggs, the facilitator of the Information Forum, described one of the objectives of the Sustainable Kentucky Round Table as taking the dialogue which was started at the *Rio to the Capitols* conference "from just talk into a little more discrete action." The hope is also to build consensus among all the sectors.

In addition, in 1992 the General Assembly created the Kentucky Long-Term Policy Research Center. The Center's mission is to serve as a catalyst to improve the way decisions are made by looking at them in a broader context, specifically long-term implications, critical trends, and emerging issues. The Center will also focus on developing a long-term strategic policy for the state.

Although the Center is fairly small and still in the early stages, it has perhaps the greatest potential for successfully developing sustainable development initiatives in the country. Slated for the Center's agenda is Kentucky Outlook 2000, an initiative funded by the Environmental Protection Agency. The task challenges the Center, working with the Cabinet for Natural Resources and Environmental Protection, to anticipate future needs of the state and respond to them by coming up with solutions without jeopardizing quality of life. By educating people through hosting a national

conference, by initiating Round Table discussions to build consensus and to come up with sustainable development strategies, and by establishing a Long-Term Policy Research Center, Kentucky has certainly taken the first steps toward sustainable development.

Maine

Maine has made considerable gains in creating a sustainable future for the state. In 1993, the 116th Maine Legislature passed House Bill 616, addressing "the purpose and philosophy of sustainable development and its relevance to regions of the State and the State as a whole" and mandating that the Economic Development and Business Assistance Coordinating Council develop economic development guidelines adhering to the principles of sustainable development. In addition to offering recommendations, the Coordinating Council helps local regions develop long-term economic strategies and assists in implementation by coordinating state services. To date, all work conducted by the Coordinating Council has been voluntary; funding for the Council was not included in the legislation. Naturally, this has created many obstacles. The Council suffers from understaffing and resource shortages. In addition, there is some confusion over the draft report. The intentions of the members are solid and positive, but the recommendations have become tangled in the verbiage of the report. What the recommendations actually suggest is still under dispute.

Subsequent legislation called for the creation of the Maine Economic Growth Council to assist the Coordinating Council in developing standards and principles for sustainable development. Originally, it was an eight-week effort to hammer out recommendations to be presented to the governor and state legislature. Topics addressed were Energy and Utilities, Regulatory Policy, Job Training and Education, and Tax and Fiscal Policy. Overall, more than two hundred people from the state legislature and industries came together to work on recommendations which were finally presented in May 1993. Larry Horwitz, a Council member, commented that a fundamental problem with the Council was the lack of an environmental perspective and that the Council began with "preconceived notions of what the outcome should be," suggesting only quick fixes rather than looking at the underlying problem. Recommended actions included establishing a new environmental regulatory permitting process, implementing favorable pricing mechanisms to encourage the efficient use of existing energy supplies, setting up an implementation mechanism, and continuing further with the initial effort of the Growth Council. The latter recommendation spawned further legislation providing funding for an on-going Economic Growth Council.

This second Economic Growth Council has started working on the preliminary stages of developing a vision to jump-start Maine's economy. The nineteen member Growth Council is made up of state legislators and representatives from the labor, education, business, and environment sectors from across the state. According to Henry Bourgeois at the Maine Development Foundation, which works with the Council, support and consensus among Growth Council members have been positive.

However, neither the Coordinating Council nor the Growth Council has attempted to define what specifically makes up sustainable economic growth. The two Councils must engage in a "significant discussion on what economic growth is" in order to move onto the next step, comments John Bubier, who serves as an advisor on the Economic Growth Council and a full member on the Coordinating Council. But because the recommendations offered by the Economic Growth Council are currently set within a fairly broad context, they are more likely to be implemented. Mr. Bubier also noted that achieving collaboration between all groups has been difficult.

The idea behind the legislation establishing the two Councils is a commendable one since it forces the state to look at all factors concerning economic growth. But the steps have been small and slow. Representatives from the environmental and social organizations, essential parties when forming a sustainable development plan, are underrepresented. And as noted earlier, funding for the Coordinating Council is nonexistent, further complicating the process. Moreover, the two Councils essentially work independently of one another. More stands to be gained if both Councils work together.

Although opinions on the Councils remain varied and conflicting, Maine continues to work on creating a sustainable future. A particularly successful example of sustainable development policy in action is Maine's Sensible Transportation Policy, which voters passed as a referendum in response to a proposal to widen the Maine Turnpike. The people of Maine have realized that the state's transportation network has the potential to impose lasting and sometimes harmful effects on the quality of air, land, and water. Thus, it is the policy's goal to minimize these negative effects by evaluating all reasonable alternatives for highway construction or reconstruction projects, reducing the state's dependence on foreign oil, encouraging energy-efficient forms of transportation, ensuring necessary repairs and improvements on all roads, meeting the transportation needs of all Maine residents, and incorporating

a public participation process to address the concerns of the people. In order to meet the public participation directive, eight Regional Transportation Advisory Committees were established. Members were selected from a pool of applicants and are currently meeting throughout the state to develop regional transportation plans and funding priorities.

As a result of this policy, the Maine Turnpike was not expanded. Rather, the Maine Turnpike Authority is investing in alternative, multi-modal transportation programs, including car pools and trains. In addition, a highly ambitious and truly multi-modal transportation system, which includes the use of taxi cabs, limousines, buses, and trolleys, is in the works in the town of Wells. Another example of the policy's success is the Transportation Improvement Program in Portland. The city allocated over half of an almost $9 million transportation budget to non-highway projects. Instead, bicycle routes, sidewalks, and improvements to the subway systems are being worked on. Policies such as the Sensible Transportation Policy should not only be praised, but emulated by other states around the country; the plan contained all the necessary components to be successful, and clearly it is.

Virginia

Much along the same lines as Maine, the Virginia House passed Joint Resolution No. 653 in February 1993 which called for the development of a state sustainable development strategy. In response to this, the Environmental Law Institute, an independent research and education center, has released *Blueprint for Sustainable Development of Virginia.* This report discusses such issues as pollution prevention, air quality, community building, and economic vitality and provides recommendations and solutions to work toward these goals.

In March 1994, the House passed Joint Resolution No. 291, calling for the creation of a Sustainable Development Task Force to "assess current sustainable development initiatives in the Commonwealth and other areas, develop a statewide strategic plan for sustainable development, and recommend appropriate actions which state and local governments, citizen groups, and nonprofit organizations, especially rural areas of the Commonwealth, might consider for implementation." Unlike the 1993 resolution which encourages Virginians to consider sustainable development alternatives for the state, Resolution No. 291 brings together multiple stakeholders to specifically look at and recommend actions. Staff support, technical assistance, and some funding have been allocated to assist in its efforts.

Unfortunately, organization of the Task Force has been slow. In addition to the Secretaries of Commerce and Trade, who make up part of the Task Force, all the legislative members have been appointed; however, the Governor has yet to appoint any of the six citizen members. Moreover, assignments to study the fifty or sixty issues have also not been made. According to the resolution, all findings and recommendations should be completed in time to be presented to the 1995 General Assembly, allowing less than a year for the Task Force to select members, educate and build consensus among them, conduct meetings and research, create a vision, and formulate recommendations. Although it is encouraging to see Virginia so anxious to begin sustainability efforts, more time is needed in order to produce a comprehensive and complete study and consequently, to propose appropriate recommendations.

Looking Forward

Almost inevitably, with sustainable development discussion comes opposing views, frustration, and disagreements. It is unlikely that all parties will be completely satisfied with the results. Fortunately, this has not scared away Minnesota, Kentucky, Maine, and Virginia from seriously addressing the issue. In doing so, they have become models for sustainable development.

Both Minnesota and Kentucky have experienced some success in transforming their communities into sustainable ones. Kentucky has been quite progressive in that it is taking the issue of sustainability head-on. Likewise, the one-year initiative in Minnesota helped to move sustainable development a step in the right direction, but with the recent veto of additional funding towards sustainability efforts, it appears that the state has only more difficulties to come. And although the recommendations from both states hold great promise, nothing will be accomplished without full support from all communities.

Virginia and Maine lead the pack in terms of progressive resolutions and legislation by creating a forum where sustainable development is specifically discussed and sought after. Currently, each state is encountering difficulty, but hopefully, in time, Virginia's Task Force and Maine's Councils will emerge with innovative recommendations and ideas on how to implement them.

Indeed, the need for sustainable development has been recognized, and many states have jumped to the challenge. Conferences and round tables are cropping up all over the country from Alaska to Florida and places in between. Unfortunately, some initiatives

have been cut short due to little or no funding. Some contain ambitious recommendations but lack the consensus and support needed from all groups. Others are subject to the often wavering political attitudes of the day. And many conduct extensive research and make substantial recommendations but lack a means of implementation. Until all these aspects are resolved, the notion of a sustainable future will remain just that, in the future. CP

Cohousing: A Model for Sustainable Communities

Allan Rosen

This article investigates the potential of cohousing as a model for sustainable communities. Cohousing is a new form of residential development which has become popular in the United States over the last five years. It is conceived as an alternative to conventional tract-style subdivisions. Cohousing communities utilize a community-based design process and are intended to foster more cooperative lifestyles among their residents.

The first section of this article provides background information to familiarize the reader with the basics of cohousing. Included is a formal definition of cohousing, a brief description of its origin, and a summary of the current status of cohousing in the United States. The second section investigates cohousing's relationship to sustainability. It begins by delineating the sustainability movement into three agendas for action: the environmental, equity, and process agendas; and then discusses how cohousing addresses these agendas. The third section looks at trends in cohousing's evolution and at strategies for facilitating its continued growth. Three aspects of its evolution are explored: the site plan, target populations, and the planning process. This section also suggests how current planning practices can be adapted to facilitate the growth of cohousing.

Defining Cohousing

Kathryn McCamant and Charles Durret coined the English word "cohousing" in their 1988 book *Cohousing: A Contemporary Approach to Housing Ourselves*. They offer a definition based on four characteristics common to cohousing developments:

- "**Participatory Process**: Residents organize and participate in the planning and design process for the housing development, and are responsible as a group for all final decisions.
- **Intentional Neighborhood Design**: The physical design encourages a strong sense of community.
- **Extensive Common Facilities**: An integral part of the community, common areas are designed for daily use, to supplement private living areas.
- **Complete Resident Management**: Residents manage the development, making decisions of common concern at community meetings."[1]

The participatory design process allows future residents to play a prominent and vital role in designing the layout and format of the community. Residents become fully invested in the entire development process. Major decisions are made by consensus. This process results in the future residents having a significant impact on the final design. The physical design encourages a sense of community by increasing the areas of social interaction. Placing parking on the periphery gives the neighborhood a pedestrian orientation and is one of the prime design attributes of cohousing.

Another important design feature is the interface between the public courtyards and pedestrian streets formed by the homes' location and the homes themselves. Frequently, the more public rooms in each house (e.g., the kitchen or family room) front onto

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these public areas. Similar to the way in which Frank Lloyd Wright's residential designs intertwine the indoors and outdoors, cohousing homes intertwine public and private spaces. It is this articulation of semi-public, semi-private patterns that encourages spontaneous interactions among neighbors.

The extensive common facilities of cohousing communities complement the self-sufficient private homes. The common house is the most prominent shared feature of a cohousing community. It usually includes a kitchen and dining area for regularly scheduled community meals and one or more specialty rooms, such as a laundry, children's room, guest room, workshop, and/or art studio. Common outdoor spaces may include sports fields, gardens, a children's playground, a pond, and/or a gazebo. Shared access to such amenities further stimulates the comradery of cohousing communities.

Complete resident management also encourages social cohesion. Through collective responsibility for activities including landscaping, maintenance, children's activities, common meals, consensus building, and dispute resolution, community residents develop interpersonal and management skills critical to the health of their community.

Origin of Cohousing

In 1964, a young Danish architect, Jan Gudmand-Hoyer, gathered together a group of friends to explore housing options. They sought an alternative to the single-family suburban house and to the multi-story apartment building. Row houses seemed less isolating but they lacked a sense of community. By the end of the year, the group had purchased property on the outskirts of Copenhagen where they planned to build a new community of twelve homes and a common house. Opposition from local residents prevented this project from being completed. Yet, within a few years, the social climate was more accepting of what would become cohousing.

In 1967, author Bodil Graae published an article entitled "Children Should Have One Hundred Parents", which called for more humane residential neighborhoods. She concluded the article by asking that those interested in forming a housing "collective" which was children-friendly to contact her. Over fifty people responded. The next year, Gudmand-Hoyer's article "The Missing Link Between Utopia and the Dated One-Family House" was published in a national newspaper. He received over one hundred responses from persons interested in living in a place like he described. Later that year, Gudmand-Hoyer, Graae, and some families from the earlier failed endeavor began to plan a cohousing community. This time they were successful. The first two cohousing communities came out of this effort. In the fall of 1972, 27 families moved into the first community, Saettedammen, and the next year, 33 families moved into Skraplanet. By 1980, there were 12 owner-occupied cohousing communities in Denmark. Two years later, there were 22 and at the end of the decade more than 120 of these communities had been built.[2] Clearly, cohousing had struck a chord with many families.

In Europe there are now several hundred cohousing communities, primarily in Denmark, Sweden, and the Netherlands. With over twenty years experience of cohousing in Europe, the various communities exhibit many variations of the basic model. Tenure patterns now include both renter and mixed-tenure, in addition to the original tenure pattern of ownership. Where the original communities were privately financed initiatives, there are now also cohousing communities that are government-financed and public-private ventures. In contrast to the limited demographic diversity of the original communities, recent communities have greater age and socioeconomic diversity. In addition, the cohousing model has been adapted to meet the special needs of elderly populations.[3]

The Danish term for cohousing, "bofoelleskaber," translates as "living communities." Kathryn McCamant and Charles Durret are California trained architects who, during a thirteen-month period spanning 1984 and 1985, conducted a field study of 46 cohousing communities in Denmark, the Netherlands, and Sweden. Their book, *Cohousing: A Contemporary Approach to Housing Ourselves*, was published for the purpose of inspiring "people to take a more active role in creating the home and neighborhood they want to live in."[4] Since its publication, McCamant and Durret have been the chief proponents of cohousing in the United States. They have conducted hundreds of workshops and consulted with scores of emerging cohousing communities. It is safe to say that virtually all of the groups undertaking cohousing initiatives in America began when one or more individuals in the group either attended a McCamant and Durret workshop or read their book.

Current Status of Cohousing in the United States

According to the national magazine, *CoHousing: Contemporary Approaches to Housing Ourselves*, there are nine cohousing communities in America that are currently occupied.[5] All of these are west of the Mississippi. Three communities are in California, including the oldest one and the newest one. Two others are in Washington. There is one cohousing community

each in the states of Colorado, Minnesota, New Mexico, and Oregon. These communities include approximately two hundred homes, housing over four hundred people. At least six other communities are in various stages of construction and will be completed within the next twelve months, three of which are located in the eastern United States: Lake Claire in Atlanta, GA, Pioneer Valley in Pelham, MA, and Arcadia in Carrboro, NC. *CoHousing* also lists over 150 core groups in the U.S. and Canada that are currently in the process of planning a cohousing community.[6]

Cohousing is clearly experiencing growth in North America. This growth is also evidenced by the variety of resources available to persons interested in cohousing and by the extent of networking underway. Umbrella groups are forming regionally to facilitate the efforts of core groups.[7] *CoHousing* and *Northeast Cohousing Quarterly*, both extensive newsletter/magazines, have been published since 1988. There have been regional, national, and international conferences on cohousing and related issues in the past few years. Advice on a variety of cohousing issues is available from experienced cohousing consulting professionals. Scholars are publishing books and journal articles on cohousing and it is the focus of several graduate school master theses. Finally, extensive national media attention is being devoted to cohousing.

What can the phenomenal growth of cohousing in America be attributed to? A primary cause is that cohousing offers a practical solution to the mismatch between conventional housing options and today's households. Simply put, many of today's households view the traditional single-family detached home in a residential subdivision not as an ideal but rather as isolating, both geographically and socially. Such homes are not only anachronistic, they are also dysfunctional for many families. In addition, traditional American subdivisions have not only been criticized in terms of isolation, but also as being unsustainable, i.e., they require high inputs of non-renewable resources and have adverse environmental impacts. Landscape architect Clare Cooper-Marcus sums it up this way:

> "The conditions from which cohousing arises are widespread: declining household size, social isolation, the demise of the extended family, changing gender roles, and problems of social justice and resource consumption. None of these conditions is just a passing phase and, while the ideology of the detached single-family house will persist, cohousing is a high quality and highly sustainable alternative."[8]

It is the relationship between cohousing and sustainability that I now turn my focus to.

Cohousing's Relationship to Sustainability

Sustainability has become a buzzword. Around the world, it has captured the attention of politicians and policy makers, academics, business persons, and just plain folks. Sustainability attempts to address the conflict between economic growth and environmental degradation. Sustainable development patterns are those which ensure that the needs of the present population are met without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs.[9] Proposals for adapting virtually all aspects of modern life have been made in the name of sustainability.

Prominent among the concerns raised by discussions of sustainability is the per capita level of consumption of both material goods and non-renewable energy resources in the United States. The current rates of consumption bode ill for the future because they are unsustainable. Furthermore, because the U.S. is the envy of many developing nations, their development aspirations implicitly assume similar rates of consumption. Another issue of paramount concern is the search for more sustainable settlement patterns. Making American settlement patterns more sustainable would not only establish a sustainable future for our country but would also serve as an example for developing countries.

Sustainability is a multi-faceted concept. Broadly speaking, though, I believe there are three agendas under the rubric of sustainability. These classifications are labeled agendas because I view them not simply as definitions, but as calls for action, i.e., agendas for change. These are the environmental, the equity, and the process agendas. Descriptions of these agendas are as follows:

- **Environmental Agenda:** To reduce and/or eliminate the adverse environmental impacts of humanity's economic and productive processes.
- **Equity Agenda:** To address issues of poverty, livelihoods, equity, and social justice.
- **Process Agenda:** A harmonious resolution of the environmental and equity agendas will be facilitated by an inclusive planning process that actively seeks input from a diverse group of participants, particularly those individuals and communities who are usually at the socioeconomic margin. At the local level, informal, decentralized, and small-scale approaches are highly conducive to achieving sustainability.

The environmental and equity agendas define what is to be achieved with sustainability. Aspects of the environmental agenda that are relevant to settlement

patterns include resource use and conservation, recycling, and pollution; those from the equity agenda include housing affordability, childcare, and job creation. In contrast to the goal-oriented nature of the environmental and equity agendas, the process agenda states preferences for methods of seeking sustainability. Informal, decentralized, and small-scale technologies that are sustainable include passive solar heating and community-supported agriculture. This section concludes by identifying those elements of the sustainability agendas that cohousing is best suited to address and how it addresses those issues.

Cohousing and the Environmental Agenda

Cohousing's most obvious thrust towards a sustainable future is in the environmental arena. Its land use and resource utilization patterns go a long ways towards achieving sustainability.

Land Use

Existing cohousing developments in the U.S. exhibit three patterns of land use: progressive suburban, infill and adaptive re-use, and mixed use. The first category is similar to the best land use patterns adapted in mainstream residential development. Approximately one-half of the cohousing communities display this configuration. The main environmental goals of the progressive suburban pattern are the conservation of open space and minimal on-site environmental disturbance.

In both Europe and the United States, the first cohousing communities were built on previously undeveloped land. Yet, achieving sustainable settlement patterns will require increased utilization of infill and adaptive re-use strategies. The cohousing model is flexible enough to employ these strategies. Three California communities demonstrate this. In Emeryville, located in the East Bay area of San Francisco, an abandoned warehouse in an industrial neighborhood has been converted into a twelve-unit cohousing community. The Southside park community in downtown Sacramento will have 25 homes on its 1.3 acre site. It is the first inner-city residential development in Sacramento in many years. In Davis, residents of the N Street community have converted a residential, grid-style block into a cohousing community through a process of purchasing homes for sale over several years.

To a varying degree, all cohousing communities have elements of the mixed-use pattern. At a minimum, there is usually on-site childcare and some food production from gardens. The full potential of mixed-use cohousing communities has not yet been explored, however. One day we may see more emphasis on providing non-residential services to the immediate community. This is especially probable in urban settings. Such uses might include office space, space for cottage industries, day care, and food and laundry services. In rural settings, it is likely that large portions of the community's food needs will be produced within the community.

Resource Utilization

Regardless of the site's characteristics, virtually all cohousing communities incorporate sustainable resource utilization patterns into their design program. Conservation, the limited use of toxic chemicals, and the increased use of renewable energy sources are typical areas of concern. Resource conservation can apply to energy, water, and materials conservation. On the energy front, it is typical for cohousing communities to call for high standards of insulation and weatherization, to consider cogeneration technologies, and take into consideration the amount of embodied energy in building materials when making materials selection. Indirectly, of course, it is desired that residents reduce their use of private automobiles. This may be feasible because of on-site childcare, cooperative shopping trips, and on-site entertainment, thus reducing nighttime and weekend travel.

Water conservation can be enhanced through the use of water conserving plumbing fixtures, landscape design and plant selection, greywater systems and rainwater collection methods. Material consumption can be reduced both during construction and after. For instance, wood products derived from sustainable forestry practices would be preferred over those that are not. Durable-goods consumption can be reduced at the household level; vacuum cleaners and lawnmowers are likely prospects for shared use.

Non-toxic environments are another area of concern in cohousing communities. Planning for non-toxic environments includes relying substantially, or absolutely, on organic and biological methods for lawn and garden use. The other primary concern in this arena is building material selection. Residents of cohousing communities typically select non-toxic building materials. Utilization of renewable energy sources, primarily via passive solar technology and photovoltaics, is also high on the list of cohousing residents' goals.

Cohousing and the Equity Agenda

The cohousing model advances the equity agenda primarily by making housing more affordable. Cohousing can lower housing expenses two ways. First, the initial cost of the home can be reduced

through higher density, which allows the "sunk" costs to be distributed over a greater number of units. Other means for lowering the purchase price include reduction of development fees, profit margins, and marketing costs. Economies of scale in materials purchases can also be achieved. In several instances, local governments are participating in cohousing ventures to promote affordability. Alternative forms of ownership that American cohousing communities are experimenting with can also reduce the cost of housing, particularly future sales prices. These include limited equity co-ops and land trusts.

Second, cohousing also has the potential to reduce the home's operating expenses. These lifecycle costs savings are primarily a function of reduced energy consumption. Cohousing residents may also experience increased disposable income. This would result from the budget savings associated with reduced expenses for food (from common meals and on-site food production) and child care.

Cohousing and the Process Agenda

By definition and practice, cohousing is a decentralized, small-scale, and informal approach to developing residential housing. For those directly involved in creating a cohousing community, the process is highly inclusive. And, in America, most cohousing communities consider diversity an important goal. With respect to household size and residents' ages, American cohousing succeeds in achieving diversity. Socioeconomic diversity is achieved in two ways. First, local governments have participated in several cohousing projects with the express aim of making some of the housing units affordable. Second, by not practicing exclusionary zoning, i.e., requiring minimum lot and/or house sizes, cohousing communities can accommodate a wide range of home sizes. This, in turn, makes it possible for less financially-able households to join the community.

Cohousing: Trends and Support Strategies

As in Europe, cohousing in America is gaining popularity as a model for residential development. It also shows great promise as a model for sustainable, affordable, and psychologically satisfying communities. Advocates of both sustainability and affordable housing will be looking to this model as an alternative form of development that addresses their areas of concern. It is instructive for those interested in promoting cohousing to familiarize themselves with evolutionary trends in cohousing and in strategies for making the development climate more conducive to cohousing.

Evolution of the Cohousing Model

Cohousing Site and House Plans

The cohousing movement is beginning its third decade. Over this twenty-plus year history, the physical plans for cohousing sites and houses have demonstrated significant changes. With regards to private homes, the most important change is that houses in more recently developed communities are smaller than their predecessors. Community residents are adjusting their lifestyles so that they require less private space.

Site plans have also undergone an evolution. In his examination of Danish cohousing plans, Coldham identifies three stages of plan types. The courtyard model is based on traditional village settlement patterns. As cohousing became accepted, this plan evolved into the pedestrian street model. This plan better implements cohousing's goals of cooperation and social interaction. The third version involves narrowing the street and spanning it with a glazed roof. This galleria model allows the common spaces to be used year-round in Denmark's harsh winter climate. Nearly twenty Danish cohousing communities have utilized this feature.[10]

Both changes noted above are based on the European experience with cohousing. In America, the movement is too new to indicate such patterns. The small number of existing communities in the U.S., built over such a short time period, do not yield a sufficient basis for comparison. However, similar trends may reveal themselves. In any event, those designing cohousing communities can make use of this historical record to guide their planning. In addition, architects and other professionals can explore the tradeoffs made by cohousing consumers regarding private and public space.

Model Diversity

Variation in European communities is evident in terms of demographics, financing, and tenure. American cohousing developments are just beginning to show similar diversity. With regards to demographics, American communities are demonstrating significant intergenerational diversity. American communities are not yet serving special populations, such as the elderly, as is the case in Denmark. Two initiatives in California, though, are of interest. In San Luis Obispo, a core group is working with the county Housing Authority to develop a mixed-tenure community. Half of the units are planned to be rented to low-income elderly residents. In Morgan Hill, several non-profit housing agencies are working with Catholic Charities to develop a twelve-unit cohousing community for low-income single parent families. Catholic Charities will provide support services to the residents.[11]

Local governments in the U.S. are demonstrating willingness to participate in cohousing ventures. This is generally done in exchange for commitments by the community to make some of the units available as affordable housing units. This, however, coincides with the goals of the typical cohousing community. Government participation is usually through the donation or sale of the site, housing subsidies, or both. Local officials are attracted to these communities because the strong sense of community is seen as an asset. Seattle city councilman Jim Street, who has become a supporter of cohousing by working with an inner city core group, believes that cohousing residents "bring a strong commitment to reach out to their neighbors and build community spirit."[12]

Planning Process

The one area where the cohousing model may be under the most stress in America is the time it takes to complete a development. Cohousing developments can take three or more years to complete. False starts, such as elapsed site purchase options, test the patience of the core group. Such a lengthy timeframe discriminates against those who can not afford to make financial commitments several years in advance of occupancy. Such delays may also result in increased housing costs. For this reason, a market for experienced cohousing consultants is thriving. Core groups are also seeking the services of developers, some of whom are in turn attempting to develop cohousing communities.

This pressure on developing cohousing communities more quickly may lessen the commitment to the participatory planning process. This would threaten one of the foundations of a healthy cohousing community: its sense of community. It may in turn lessen the use of the common facilities and the emphasis on self-management communities. Without this interaction, the social cohesion of the group may be stunted and the skills necessary to maintain a healthy cooperative lifestyle may not be developed. To circumvent this, long-term opportunities to bond as a community should be sought to replace the process of designing a community together. There may be other vehicles for establishing the crucial sense of community. As core groups delegate more technical responsibility to professionals, they need to seek such alternatives.

Planning for Cohousing

Cohousing is a grassroots response to the need for a more humane and functional housing form. In Europe and America, the chief proponents for cohousing have been architects. To a remarkable degree, though, these ventures have been established with limited professional guidance. Yet, at one time or another all cohousing groups have interacted with planners and other local officials. The suggestions cohousing advocates offer for facilitating the growth of cohousing are similar to those of affordable housing advocates. One fundamental suggestion is that core groups should contact early and often local planners, public officials, and their future neighbors. Such a proactive stance achieves several purposes. First, it informs key persons, in a timely fashion, of an unconventional development proposal. Second, potential problems and adversaries can be identified and resolutions sought. This leads to the third reason to engage in such a dialogue. The core group can identify key persons to lobby, if necessary.

CoHousing published a list of eight regulatory and land use techniques that local governments can use to encourage cohousing. The suggested techniques are to streamline permit processing, ease development standards, zone for higher density, establish inclusionary zoning programs, offer growth control exemptions, encourage infill development, encourage adaptive reuse of older structures, and provide subsidies in the form of land donations or writedowns, fee waivers, or low interest loans.[13] Actions such as those described in this section will make the climate more amenable for cohousing.

Conclusion

Cohousing is proving itself to be a versatile and popular model for residential development in Europe and America. It also appears to have the potential for creating sustainable communities. In particular, cohousing communities aim to be environmentally sensitive and conservative consumers of material resources.

Equally important is the scale of cohousing. As a model for sustainable communities, its attainability is not constrained by the actions of elite decision makers as is much of the sustainability agenda. Instead, cohousing takes place on a grassroots level and can be accomplished essentially through collective determination. Although cohousing clearly exhibits attention to the environmental and equity agendas of sustainability, its greatest strength lies in its procedural orientation.

Cohousing creates communities that are not only environmentally sustainable, they are also psychologically sustainable. By providing a nurturing climate for individuals and families, perhaps cohousing residents can find and sustain the strength necessary to achieve sustainability on a larger scale. CP

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[1] Kathryn McCamant and Charles Durret, *CoHousing: A Contemporary Approach to Housing Ourselves* (Berkeley, CA: Ten Speed Press, 1988), 36.

[2] Ibid.

[3] *CoHousing* 6 #3 (Fall 1993).

[4] McCamant and Durret, 4.

[5] *CoHousing* 6 #3, 18-19.

[6] Ibid.

[7] *CoHousing* 6 #2 (Summer 1993), 3.

[8] Clare Cooper-Marcus, "Cohousing--an option for the 1990's," *Progressive Architecture* 72 #6 (June 1991): 113.

[9] World Commission on Environment and Development, *Our Common Future* (Oxford: Oxford University Press), 8.

[10] Bruce Coldham, "Site Plan Evaluation in Danish Cohousing," Northeast Cohousing Quarterly 2 #1(Spring 1991), 4-5.

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Consensus Building for Sustainable Communities

Karen S. Walz

Consensus-building can play a role in creating and maintaining sustainable communities. This article focuses on that role in achieving sustainability at the level of local communities, particularly in the context of United States planning practice. A design for sustainable consensus is proposed that addresses the *process* of developing public policy and describes the primary *issues* raised by the concept of sustainability and the key characteristics of the desired project *outcomes*. Examples from several community planning programs illustrate the application of this model to communities of diverse size, character, and geographic location.

Consensus-Building and Sustainable Communities

Sustainable communities result from many individual decisions made by residents, businesses, community organizations, and governments. Public policy, as expressed by community plans, policies, and programs, can help create sustainable communities because it informs and shapes these decisions. The use of a consensus-based process to create public policy offers important advantages to communities concerned about sustainability.

To many planners and community leaders, consensus-building evokes an image of large groups of people discussing issues endlessly, without reaching a decision--the ultimate sustainable meeting! In fact, consensus can be an essential tool in shaping a community's approach to meeting current and future needs.

Sustainability is a concept of global significance, but effective action toward sustainability must occur locally. Sustainable development requires that resources be used in ways which retain a resource base for use by future generations. On a global scale, the United States and other "developed" countries bear responsibility for a substantial amount of resource use. With 26 percent of the world's population, the "developed" countries account for 38 percent of the world's daily protein consumption, 79 percent of annual steel consumption, and 80 percent of commercial energy use.[1] Decisions made individually by residents, businesses, and local communities determine the collective level of resource use. Each day, individuals make choices: will a soft drink container be discarded or recycled, will the trip to work be made as a single occupant in an automobile or as part of a carpool, how much non-renewable energy will be used to heat a home to a comfortable level on a winter day? Choices about the design of a community--its public policy regarding development--contribute to the level of resource consumption by residents and businesses in that community. Since three-quarters of Americans live in urban areas,[2] the consumption choices made by city residents have a significant effect on the overall level of national resource consumption.

Local public policy choices can limit (or enhance) an individual's ability to use resources in a sustainable way. If a community offers curbside recycling, the choice to recycle a soft drink container becomes more attractive to the consumer. If travel to an employment centers is only possible by auto, even an individual who

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would prefer a shorter bicycle ride or a commute via light rail will be unable to exercise these choices. Since building design and siting affect energy needs for heating, the use of climate-appropriate building designs and subdivision standards that take advantage of solar heating can assist in accomplishing the desired result of a comfortable home with a lower level of non-renewable energy use.

Governments themselves, as consumers of resources, can use their own decisions to support a more sustainable pattern. In addition to the choices made about daily consumption levels, local public policy can affect another aspect of sustainable choice--the decision to remain in an existing community or to move to a newly-developing area. Each existing community represents the commitment of resources for capital construction, the use of land for urban development, and a historic investment in systems of travel, communication, and institutions. The resources thus invested are not readily returned to other uses. If communities remain attractive to residents and businesses, these resources will continue to contribute to long-term quality of life. If not, individuals will choose to move to new communities, requiring new resource investment in the systems, land use, and infrastructure necessary for a city. Unless our existing communities are sustainable, in terms of continuing quality of life, individual choices will make past investments ineffective. They will continue consumption patterns that, ultimately, will not be sustainable because the next generation will have neither sustainable "quality of life assets" in existing communities nor natural resource reserves to be able to design appropriate sustainable alternatives.

The processes used to develop public policy affect the sustainability of the result. At the local community level, many public policy decisions are made by a city council or similar elected body. The "majority-rule" process represented by a city council's vote on any particular issue sets public policy. However, the process leading to a vote will have a significant effect on the durability of the decision and hence, on the sustainable use of any resources invested as a result.

Decisions made without the participation of key affected groups are not likely to be supported or followed by those groups. Particularly if the decisions limit consumption, these groups will seek to overturn them. If the decisions require individual action, these groups may prevent implementation by choosing not to participate. Finally, decisions made by a small majority (the 51 percent vote) may well be overturned or reversed through the efforts of groups on the losing side of the vote. Such policy reversals mean resource investment in projects or programs that are abandoned before they are completed, that are not fully used, or that compete with one another. These reversals result in additional resource consumption with little or no quality of life benefit. When multiplied by the thousands of communities in this country, these decisions mean greater consumption and less sustainability.

"Consensus" is a concept for which there are many interpretations. One useful way to describe a consensus result is that everyone agrees to live with it, even though it may not be the ideal solution for any individual participant. Key aspects of the concept include:

- Inclusion of all affected parties ("everyone" means all those who are affected or have a stake in the outcome);
- An agreement that the parties will not try to overturn the decision, not an agreement that signifies full support of all concepts; and
- An outcome that is mutually beneficial--it adequately meets the short- and long-term needs of the parties.

Such a consensus agreement requires that all issues be considered. Participants must make trades between available options. This negotiation process enables participants to consider the long-term implications of their decisions. If successful, it creates a broad base of community support for the outcome, a level of support that is essential if the policy direction is to be maintained. In addition, this support should translate into participant willingness to make individual choices that support the consensus result.

These features of a consensus result are valuable for any public policy decision. For issues of sustainability, they become even more important. By maintaining consistent public policy, the community can invest resources in ways which will provide the greatest benefit to current residents while retaining options for future generations. By creating a broad base of support, all the individuals, businesses, and groups involved in the process are more likely to make their own choices consistent with the consensus agreement, thereby increasing sustainability. By considering all affected groups and resolving disputes in ways which consider future needs, a consensus-building process supports community quality of life which, in turn, enhances community sustainability.

A Design for Sustainable Consensus

The Process

Design of a decision-making process does not guarantee that the process results will reflect a consensus nor that they will prove to be sustainable over the long term. However, thoughtful process design can increase the likelihood that the end result will have these characteristics. Process design must be appropriate to the decision at hand. A process for developing a twenty-year comprehensive plan will differ from a process to decide operational issues for a community recycling operation. The six process recommendations below describe factors that should be considered in any public discussion to increase the opportunity for consensus and enhance the sustainability of the results.

1. Include All Affected Groups

The individuals and groups that will be affected by the decision, the "stakeholders", must be involved in the discussion and the consensus-building process. Each group brings a particular expertise and perspective to the discussion. Their participation means that these resources are used in addressing the issue. Their contributions help the process reach an outcome that maintains community quality of life, as perceived by all community members. Their support for the outcome means that the decision is less likely to be reversed after resources have been invested. Their agreement with the outcome leads to a willingness to implement it, at the level of individual and community action.

Inclusion of stakeholders can be accomplished in several different ways. One effective method is creation of a representative citizens' committee. For example, the City of Austin, Texas used a Steering Committee to develop *Austinplan*, a comprehensive plan the community prepared in the mid-1980's. Nine interest groups were identified to serve on the committee: Business and Finance; Cultural Affairs; Environmentalists; Ethnic Minorities; Human Services; Neighborhoods and Geographic Sectors; Public Institutions; Real Estate and Development; and Community at Large. The number of representatives for each group was based on the need to balance committee representation.

Interest group members were sought in two ways. Announcements in the local newspaper invited interested persons to submit an application describing their areas of interest/expertise. In addition, organizations representing certain interests, such as the Austin Chamber of Commerce, were asked to recommend three representatives for their interest group. Several hundred applications were received. The Austin City Council reviewed these applications and appointed a committee of 94 persons reflecting these diverse interests. This large group of representatives worked together, through a complex process, to propose planning policies for the City.

2. Consider Community Capacity

When the *Austinplan* process began, the community had many active organizations and a history of citizen participation in local government. Community participation in *Austinplan* involved the Steering Committee, fourteen subject area Task Groups and 24 geographic area Sector Plan organizations. The City's budget was able to accommodate the staff support and other resources for this massive public involvement project. As a result, this effort was generally consistent with the community's capacity to manage and support an extensive consensus-building process.[3]

Many communities lack the capacity in terms of staffing, funding, institutional organization, and participant expertise to carry out a process of this magnitude. Design of the process should be tailored to represent interest groups at the level that can be supported by existing community capacity. Jackson County, Missouri[4] found that a process of workshops with local community leaders, residents, and property owners, coordinated through the County Plan Commission, was effective in obtaining the participation of the interest groups affected by the County's first Master Plan. The consensus developed through this process is illustrated by the groups' support of the plan which resulted, by the plan's unanimous Plan Commission recommendation, and by its unanimous adoption by the County Legislature in 1994.

An effective consensus-building process may increase capacity for community involvement and expand knowledge about the implications of community decisions for sustainability. However, the process should be designed so it can succeed with existing capacity alone. Creation of additional capacity can be an added benefit but should not be necessary for process success.

3. Insist on Elected Officials' Involvement

A public policy process is normally initiated by elected officials. The continuing involvement of these officials is vital to the creation of a sustainable process outcome. Sustainable development, since it retains some resources for future generations, often involves limitations on resource use today. Governmental limits

on individual choices typically spark controversy. The elected officials must understand the rationale for these limits if they are to enact them and continue to support and implement them. In the case of Jackson County, the continuing involvement of the County Executive Marsha Murphy, who initiated the County's Master Plan project, was instrumental to its success.

4. Clearly Define Roles & Expectations

The concept of long-term sustainability has all the ingredients of a difficult public policy decision: the issues are complex, the results will occur over a long time period, there is uncertainty about technical aspects of the issues, and there are factors beyond the control of the local community. A consensus-building process can heighten participants' concerns and skepticism about their ability to affect results. For this reason, realistic expectations should be communicated and acknowledged at the outset.

First, participant roles must be clearly defined, consistent with community capabilities. Second, expectations, in terms of time commitment, areas for public involvement, and expected product, must be described when the process begins; modifications during the process must be communicated consistently to all participants.

In structuring a sustainable consensus process, questions about roles and expectations include:

- What are the citizen participants being asked to do? Are they to become technical experts? Are they to state a broad vision and general goals, or are they to provide specific, program-level recommendations?
- What role will the government's staff play? Will they manage meeting and schedule logistics? How much new technical analysis and professional evaluation will they provide during this process?
- How will elected and appointed officials be involved? If there are other participants, such as volunteer facilitators, what will they do?
- What issues will this process address? What choices do participants have in dealing with issues that lack complete technical information?
- What are the process deadlines? What results are expected and at what level of detail?
- What is meant by consensus in this process? What procedures will be used if the participants don't reach complete agreement? What happens if no agreement is reached before the process deadline?
- Who will be responsible for outreach to the identified interest groups? Who will communicate with the community at large? How will the media be involved?

A clear understanding of participant roles and agreement on expectations about the process and its products will encourage participants to make realistic commitments to the project. Process-related disputes can be reduced, allowing all participants to focus on the difficult questions of planning for a sustainable future.

The *Austinplan* process began with written descriptions of the roles of City staff, Steering Committee members, other citizen participants, facilitators, and elected/appointed officials. As the process continued, changes to these roles and to other procedures within the process were debated by an executive committee of participants[5] and then communicated in writing to all participants.

5. Use Dispute Resolution Techniques

The process of reaching consensus on a community's future is, essentially, a multi-party negotiation process. If the goal is sustainability, disputes cannot be resolved by agreeing to "give something to everyone". Agreeing to extend sewer service into several new areas, for moderate development of each, may resolve a dispute about which large area to serve. But if a sustainable community is to result, property in some (or most) of these areas may remain undeveloped in the near future. As this issue shows, dispute resolution techniques are even more important to a sustainable consensus process since sustainability may require more difficult trade-offs.

Resources for dispute resolution should be provided to process participants, in the form of information, training, and/or skilled personnel. *Getting to Yes*[6] and *Breaking the Impasse: Consensual Approaches to Resolving Public Disputes*[7] are among the many references that describe dispute resolution techniques appropriate to a public process.

In Austin, one technique for resolving disputes proved especially effective in resolving a dispute between the environmentalists and developers on the task group charged with recommending land use policy. When the appropriate development standards for hillside development could not be resolved in the 30-member task group, each of these interests appointed individuals to represent their viewpoints on this particular issue. The two individuals met and, with the assistance of a facilitator, negotiated a compromise that

provided the opportunity for added development density in exchange for project design that protected natural areas.

A second technique, particularly appropriate for sustainable communities, allows resolution of issues that involve uncertainty about future demands. San Jose, California prepared its *Horizon 2000 General Plan* in the early 1980s, at a time when employment growth in the Silicon Valley area was magnifying San Jose's function as a "bedroom community" for workers employed in other cities. The Coyote Valley area became the focus of pressure to plan new residential development. The resolution of this dispute was a plan that allowed some non-residential development in Coyote Valley, with residential development to follow when certain "trigger" levels of development demand and jobs-housing balance were reached.

6. Make Participation Meaningful

The final process recommendation is one that may seem obvious, but is essential to a sustainable community -- public participation must be meaningful. Many residents are extremely cynical about government's responsiveness and effectiveness. When a process of consensus-building is initiated, these residents are asked to contribute time and resources to develop public policy. If the elected officials do not follow the recommendations that result from such a process, this cynical view of government is strongly reinforced and residents' willingness to participate in implementing any public policy will decrease significantly. This was the case in Austin when a new City Council did not take action on the recommendations made by the *Austinplan* participants.

Decision-makers concerned about creating sustainable communities must be prepared to implement the consensus-based recommendations from the process they establish. If the consensus focuses on a community vision or a goals statement, the government should be prepared to follow up with more detailed planning and implementation programs to achieve these goals. If recommendations establish policy on government programs such as recycling, or development regulation such as passive solar design, the government should be prepared to allocate funds for the program in its operating budget or modify the subdivision regulations to carry out these policies.

A sustainable community is not created, or maintained, by local governments acting alone. Process participants must also be partners in action to achieve the agreed-upon goals. Participating interest groups must be prepared to implement the sustainable consensus results. Meaningful participation means that interest groups take action as well. By working together, the participants, both public and private, who shaped the consensus can create the sustainable community that consensus described.

The Issues

The issues addressed in a traditional comprehensive planning process are closely related to the creation of sustainable communities. In planning for sustainability, some of these issues must be presented differently, with different analysis of implications and opportunities for community action. The presentation of these issues can aid in building consensus and should support efforts to create sustainable public policy. Five issues with particular significance to sustainable communities are described below.

1. Public & Private Investment

Capital investment decisions are important to sustainability for several reasons. They involve the use of land and the construction of buildings or other facilities designed for long term use; consequently, they are decisions that are largely irreversible, e.g. once a grassland has been cleared and graded for urban development, return to its natural state is very unlikely. Capital investment decisions also include private owners' choices about the location of a new home or development of a shopping center as well as public choices such as the extension of sewage collection lines or renovation of a central library. These investments often involve a large opportunity cost as well. Investment of a city's capital funds in a new fire station means those funds cannot be spent to renovate an old recreation center.

A traditional comprehensive planning process considers questions of market demand and existing capacity when addressing these investments. Planning for a sustainable community must consider other aspects of these investment decisions:

- Reuse or renovation of existing buildings, facilities and neighborhoods can be viewed as a way to continue the effective use of resources committed by past investments.
- When the long-term costs of service provision, daily resource consumption, and environmental externalities are considered, development of outlying land may be much more costly than its market price suggests.
- The "life-cycle cost" of an investment must be considered, not just the initial capital outlay. By including the costs to operate or use the capital

investment, cost comparisons reflect a more complete picture of consumption. The sustainable investment options are more clearly identified.

By leaving some land undeveloped, natural areas are retained that enhance current residents' quality of life. These areas also retain development options to meet the needs of future generations, for whom current development patterns may not be preferable.

2. Resource Management & Consumption

Local governmental operations and consumption by residents and businesses also use resources. These decisions are relatively reversible when compared to the capital investments discussed above. They are not, however, always addressed in community planning processes. A common approach is to assume that resource consumption will continue at current level of use per capita (or another consumption unit). Planning efforts then determine how large a supply of the resource must be acquired to meet future needs.

These daily choices become more critical to a sustainable planning process because continuation of current consumption patterns can no longer be assumed: there may not be enough of the resource and the reserves that do exist may need to be maintained for future generations. Instead, the sustainable planning process should consider the contribution of consumption to community quality of life. It then should determine whether there are other ways to achieve these quality of life goals. If community residents want attractive, landscaped medians along major roadways, the use of native landscaping or xeriscape may achieve this goal more effectively than operational choices to water, fertilize and mow more frequently.

In addressing consumption issues, participants in a consensus-building process can contribute to the discussion of alternatives to the "standard" or "average" consumption patterns. Rather than accepting the average amount of water use per capita as the basis for planning, participants can consider the range of actual consumption within a community. Process participants with lower use can propose practices that would reduce consumption by the high volume users. In this way, the average is reduced, fewer resources are consumed, and quality of life objectives may still be achieved.

3. Accessibility

In many communities, planning for access means ensuring that roadways are built to handle projected traffic. For a sustainable community, accessibility is a much broader concept, implying access to information and opportunities as well as physical (automobile) access. Without this broader access, some residents become disenfranchised and, over time, polarization of the community will make it a less desirable and less sustainable community.

While the typical planning process focuses on the "bricks and mortar" of roads and other infrastructure, a sustainable planning effort must focus first on the people in a community and on their ability to obtain the information, skills, services, facilities, and other resources that make the community accessible. Again, the sustainable consensus process supports this objective because it includes people whose experience can identify the barriers that exist now. The participation of these individuals is vital if the community of the future is to provide the equality of access and opportunity that are important to a sustainable community.

4. Community Character

A sustainable community reflects its surroundings and its citizens. The climate, topography, and natural resources of an area should affect the characteristics of a community that will be sustainable in its use of local resources and need to import other resources. A community that does not meet its citizens' needs for quality of life, security, identity, and livability will be less sustainable over time because its citizens (as residents and investors) will choose to locate elsewhere. For a typical comprehensive planning process, community character may be a minor aspect of plan implementation, addressed by design review for certain projects. A process for sustainable community planning must give greater importance to this issue. Public involvement, through a consensus-building process, is vital to address this issue effectively. Community participants can identify the features that are most significant to them in defining their community's character. Their evaluation (as 'users' of the city) provides direction that can shape community design to support continuing vitality.

A critical dilemma faced by existing communities in planning for sustainability is the pressure, regionally and nationally, for outward growth and movement to new communities. These trends work against the continuing attractiveness of older cities and, hence, their sustainability as vital communities. Community character issues provide existing communities with the ability to offer distinctive living environments that do not exist in new communities. Existing communities, whether small towns or neighborhoods in larger cities,

enjoy a human scale, a connection with the past, and sense of identity that is often lacking in new areas. By building on these unique aspects of existing community character, a community can offer attractive options for future residents while retaining a scale that is supportive of sustainable development objectives.

5. Quality of Life Links All Issues

For communities in the United States, a sustainable future must include the concept of continuing a desired quality of life. Communities with a perceived decline in quality of life experience disinvestment and outmigration by residents and business owners who can choose among many available locations in this country. Since quality of life relates directly to an individual's experience of a community, the choices made by individuals, businesses, and governments that affect the character of communities will in turn determine whether these communities will be sustainable.

Quality of life is a concept that is affected by the technical issues often addressed in long-range planning--the adequacy of roadways, availability of opportunities for housing development, effectiveness of city emergency response services. Yet quality of life considers these issues in an integrated way, as an individual resident perceives the experience of living in that community. This integrated approach to the issues supports a consideration of sustainability, since these concerns are linked to one another and, in some cases, involve trade-offs in investment decisions. By including overall quality of life considerations in a planning process, the substantive issues can be considered in a way that supports sustainable choices.

Quality of life offers a means to use community involvement effectively as well, since it changes the focus of discussion from one of technical standards to one of the user's experience. This approach can serve to make participation more effective and therefore, increase community support for the result. At the same time, a consensus-building process offers an effective way to make the trade-offs that may be necessary, while remaining consistent with the overall goal of a sustainable quality of life.

The Outcome

A planning process often results in a document--a set of statements. Consensus increases community support for the concepts and recommendations found in the plan; this "buy in" increases the chances for successful implementation. What outcomes are most critical for sustainability?

1. Changes in Investment, Consumption, and Lifestyle Choices

An effective process of sustainable consensus-building should change community resource use. Understanding of the long-term implications of investment decisions should help governments make more sustainable choices in capital and operating budgets. Efforts to make sustainable lifestyle options available should allow individual residents, business owners, and institutions to make choices that consume less while maintaining or enhancing quality of life and community character. As individuals choose lifestyle options like in-town housing near transit stops, the larger community and the private sector can see the benefits of these options. Over time, individual decisions should support sustainable development patterns. Private and public implementation will be more realistic if the policy is adopted with a broad base of community support.

2. Stable Policy Direction

A decision-making process based on consensus should result in stronger public support for the resultant policy direction. This, in turn, should allow the local government to implement the policy with less risk of community direction shifting dramatically. A sustainable community is a long-term goal; its success will not be apparent within an elected official's term of office. Unless the policy direction remains consistent, the community will be unable to test its effectiveness. The consensus process should result in policy that is more sustainable because it is more stable.

3. Monitoring and Feedback

Monitoring of progress is essential for any long-term program. In Jackson County, Missouri, the Master Plan includes provisions for monitoring development patterns and service demands annually; other communities have established "quality of life indicators" that allow the community to measure progress toward its desired quality of life. The feedback from these monitoring efforts allows the community to determine whether initial implementation has been effective in increasing sustainability. Policies and programs can then be modified as appropriate to accomplish these objectives.

4. Flexible Response to Change

Some changes in community character and growth dynamics cannot be anticipated. New technology, global economics, and other factors may affect a community's efforts to increase sustainability in ways that are not anticipated when a plan is developed. For this reason, a sustainable planning process should include the ability to respond to these changes over

time. In Jackson County, Missouri, for example, the future development plan is illustrated by a 'development diagram' showing the general characteristics of planned development. The plan then describes the character of development in each policy area. As development proposals are made, the plan provides direction yet allows flexibility in the specific details of individual projects. Sustainable community objectives related to service provision and community character can be achieved while responding to changing conditions.

5. Continuing Community Involvement

A sustainable consensus process should result in agreement on policy direction--the substantive consensus. In addition, it should strengthen the community's capacity for involvement and coordinated action on a variety of issues. San Jose, California has successfully built community participation in planning programs. This involvement has allowed the City to work in partnership with neighborhood groups, business organizations, and other interested parties to prepare focused area plans and programs addressing issues such as infill housing, energy conservation, and resource management. Some *Austinplan* participants have continued to work together in negotiating agreements for a Balcones Canyonlands Conservation Plan as a means to balance development and environmental protection issues. Success in carrying out plans for a sustainable community requires continuing participation by all community interest groups. This continuing participation should be an outcome of a sustainable consensus process.

Conclusion

Planning cannot resolve all the issues related to sustainable resource use. Local community action cannot guarantee global sustainability. But planning and action to build consensus can improve local community sustainability. And if sustainability, like politics, is all ultimately local, the actions of each individual community contribute to the long-term health of the nation and the planet. Sustainable consensus, community by community, can help achieve this global goal. CP

Notes

[1] World Commission on Environment and Development, 1987. *Our Common Future*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. Page 33.

[2] 1990 urban population. U. S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, 1993. *Statistical Abstract of the United States 1993*. Washington, D.C.

[3] Even in a community like Austin, changing political and economic conditions can change the capacity for planning. When the local economy turned down in 1986, City budget and staff resources were constrained, affecting the ability to support the massive process already underway.

[4] Jackson County is the county in which Kansas City, Independence, and seventeen other smaller cities and towns are located.

[5] The Executive Committee included the Steering Committee Co-chairs and the chairs of each of the fourteen subject area Task Groups. Later in the process, a second committee was established to resolve inconsistencies among Task Group recommendations. This group, the Integration Committee, included representatives chosen by the Task Groups themselves. It was responsible for the final consensus plan recommended through the *Austinplan* process.

[6] Fisher, Roger and William Ury, 1981. *Getting to Yes: Negotiating Agreement Without Giving In*. Penguin Books, New York.

[7] Susskind, Lawrence and Jeffrey Cruikshank, 1987. *Breaking the Impasse: Consensual Approaches to Resolving Public Disputes*. Basic Books, New York.

1994 Weiss Competition Winner

Jason C. Cashman

As a submission to this juried event, I presented a painting which I consider to be non-titled, rather than "untitled." This piece, rather than merely reflecting Urban Livability, is a manifestation of "Urban Live-Ability;" it is a conglomeration of accidents, reflections, moods, and syntheses of visual images and auditory disturbances along with secondary perceptions of tastes, touches, and smells, which are experienced and perceived in an urban environment. As these forms breathe, move, act, sing, and dance through and in their environments, they break down the boundaries of Art and Life by means of extending experience rather than existing as mere duplications of Life.

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*Born in Lynn, Massachusetts, **Jason Cashman** graduated with a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree from UNC-Chapel Hill in May of 1994. Jason plans to move to New York City to continue his creative work and promote his artistic career. This painting won first place in the second annual Weiss Competition on Urban Livability, which was funded through the Professors Charles and Shirley Weiss Urban Livability Program.*

Departmental News
Abstracts of Recent Masters Projects

The 1993 Illinois Housing Needs Survey: An Analysis of Illinois' Housing Concerns and Resources from the Perspective of Housing Providers *by Mark McCann*

The Illinois Housing Development Authority (IHDA) commissioned the 1993 Illinois Housing Needs Survey to determine how IHDA can better serve the needs of state residents. The survey was sent to over 700 community development corporations, public housing authorities, municipal governments, non-profit client service organizations, and regional planning commissions. Two hundred responses from throughout the state revealed the housing needs of the residents of Illinois' diverse regions. Pressing concerns were evident in the City of Chicago, the Chicago suburbs, downstate cities (Rockford, Springfield, Champaign, Bloomington), and rural areas. The consensus about housing needs within regions and the diversity of needs from region to region were noteworthy. This paper analyzes the results of the survey, incorporates census results, and draws conclusions about how IHDA can improve housing conditions in Illinois.

Sports Facility Development: The Urban Planner's Perspective *by Chris Steele*

The 1990's have witnessed a wave of sports facilities construction unheard of since the first steel and concrete, or "fireproof", baseball parks were constructed in the 1910s. The large majority of these new facilities are publicly owned and operated, due largely to team owners' implicit or explicit threats to move cherished sports franchises from their home towns. It is these threats, real or otherwise, that give sports teams great negotiating power and leverage when facilities, lease arrangements, and revenue streams are discussed. The result is that cities, or more accurately politicians, are only too happy to build facilities to save their teams, and hence their city's "image." The same can be said of cities attempting to woo existing franchises to relocate to their area.

Problems arise when towns realize, usually too late, that many of these facilities have been poorly sited, poorly designed, and lose money. Fiscal policy and urban design analysis are familiar tools for the urban planner. This paper explores the ways planners can be included to improve the sports facility development process.

An Evaluation of Transportation and Land Use Measures to Protect Urban Air Quality *by Andy Bollman*

This paper focuses on the use of transportation control measures (TCMs) to reduce air pollution in the U.S. TCMs have the ability to reduce mobile source emissions by eliminating or reducing vehicle trips, vehicle miles traveled, and/or congestion. TCMs are policies and programs that attempt to either reduce the demand for inefficient transportation alternatives (especially the single-occupant vehicle) or increase the capacity and efficiency of the current transportation network (e.g., through traffic signal synchronization). An overview of the implementation history of TCMs follows, including a description of the current legislative and political frameworks upon which planners must build. For example, the 1990 Clean Air Act Amendments and the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act of 1991 (ISTEA) create an entirely

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new planning environment for TCMs, which includes mandates for TCMs in areas with the most severe air quality problems and increased federal funding for the implementation of TCM programs.

This background is followed by a detailed description and evaluation of TCMs that are available to local, regional, and state planners to mitigate the effects of transportation activity on air quality. The paper describes the evidence that has been developed on TCMs based on implementation experience and modeling studies. For each TCM, estimates are provided of the potential level of reductions in vehicle trips, vehicle miles traveled, and mobile source hydrocarbon emissions. Next is a description of TCM design and implementation issues, including the proper structuring of the TCM planning process, the interactive relationship between individual TCMs, and estimates of cost-effectiveness for each TCM. The paper concludes with a projection of the outlook for TCMs over the next two decades, and prescriptions for short-term and long-term TCM programs for the Research Triangle region. These prescriptions are based on the transportation and land use characteristics of the region and the lessons learned from TCM implementation in other areas of the country.

The Triangle Land Conservancy's Richland Creek Corridor Preservation Project: Corridor Management Plan *by Dave Feinstein*

This document is the first part of a two-part planning project of the Triangle Land Conservancy (TLC), a local land trust operating in the Raleigh-Durham-Chapel Hill, North Carolina region. In 1993, TLC set out to prepare a long-term preservation plan and acquisition strategy for the land along Richland Creek in rapidly-developing northwest Raleigh. Located between two large tracts of open space, Umstead State Park and NC State University's Schenck Forest, Richland Creek flows through one of the last substantially undeveloped stream corridors in Raleigh. As a result, the creek connects these two separate areas of permanent open space into a single, highly-viable habitat unit. The corridor along the creek encompasses a mixture of private and public trust lands, and the scenic beauty of the nearby natural areas have made these properties highly valuable for residential development. While some development of the area is likely, much of the creek may be degraded or closed to public access in the process.

To help ensure a sound future for the corridor, this document has been created for the Triangle Land Conservancy (TLC). It serves as an information database and statement of TLC's preferred plan of action to guide the organization's efforts in preserving land in the corridor. The plan describes the natural and historic features of the corridor. It also provides tract-by-tract management guidelines for preserving and enhancing the corridor's ecosystem. Because all private land within the corridor cannot be acquired for preservation by TLC, the plan emphasizes the identification of the best opportunities to maximize corridor conservation. It also suggests the methods by which this may be accomplished.

The information provided by the database and plan is expected to form the basis for the second phase of the project--an expansion of the planning process to involve landowners, governing agencies, and other stakeholders. Through this project, TLC hopes to create a permanently viable open space corridor connecting Schenck Forest and Umstead Park.

Applying Neo-Traditional Principles to Large-Area Planning: A Framework for Building a Community Development Plan and Guidance System *by Toby Millman*

Many suburban communities are beginning to recognize that conventional approaches to planning and development management are resulting in unsatisfactory environments for their residents. Oft-cited examples of suburban ills include loss of community character, lack of community identity, inadequate and inaccessible parks, suburban sprawl, and poor access to urban services.

The principles espoused by neo-traditional planning advocates hold promise for correcting these problems. Their emphasis on compact, pedestrian-friendly development directly addresses many of the growth problems afflicting suburbia. To date, however, most neo-traditional endeavors have been confined to individual projects on isolated sites. While these developments are well-intentioned in their goals to improve quality-of-life, they are largely ineffective if the over-arching land use policies, and the resulting adjacent development are incompatible with the principles of neo-traditional development.

The benefits of neo-traditionalism can only be realized through a comprehensive re-orientation of the community's planning and development management systems. This document is intended as a guide for communities wishing to incorporate neo-traditional principles in the land use, transportation, and urban design components of their comprehensive plan. To this end, it is divided into three parts: 1) Establishing the nexus between neo-traditional principles and suburban development problems, 2) Discussing the conventional

development management techniques available to implement neo-traditional principles, and 3) Establishing a framework through which neo-traditional plans and guidance systems can be built.

A Coordinated Housing Development for Orange County's Low Income Population: Preliminary Feasibility and Recommendations *by Pete Farquhar*

Orange Community Housing Corporation (OCHC) received a grant in 1993 to coordinate the efforts of all organizations providing housing for Orange County's low income population. The result has been an agreement to develop several neighboring projects on one fifteen acre site north of downtown Chapel Hill. The site will include a shelter for homeless families, a shelter for battered women, apartments for the low income elderly, and apartments for low-income families.

Despite potential conflicts between elderly residents and the younger low-income population, the project is an excellent way to meet a variety of Orange County's housing needs. Locating the projects as neighbors presents several opportunities for shared services, including shuttle service, clinic space, and permanent housing placement services. The site will border the planned Southern Orange Services Center, which will provide services needed by each group of residents. Additionally, the coordinated development effort will minimize conflict over funding sources and sites.

This paper first examines the planning and social science literature that relates to each of the sub-projects. Next, the potential shape of each sub-project is described, based on interviews with each sponsoring agency. An assessment of the need for each project is also included, based on statistics provided by local agencies and census data. The most striking portion of this section describes the alarming growth in the number of families with children using Chapel Hill's Community House homeless shelter. Finally, the capital and operating budgets for each project are estimated, and potential funding sources are surveyed.

An Evaluation of Cluster Zoning in Practice *by Angela Gayle Shope Stiefbold*

Cluster development is an alternative to traditional subdivision, and is used to provide common recreation areas, conserve environmentally sensitive areas, maintain open space, and preserve rural character and farmland. Proponents have provided many site-specific examples of the benefits of cluster development, but there has been little evaluation of the impact cluster zoning has had on development patterns in jurisdictions where it has been adopted.

This study evaluates the use of rural cluster zoning in Montgomery County, Maryland and residential cluster zoning in Chapel Hill, North Carolina. Both jurisdictions allow cluster as an optional method of subdivision. However, in Montgomery County the intent is to preserve agriculture and open space. Between 1981 and 1991, 85 percent of the subdivision applications in Montgomery County's Patuxent Planning Area were for cluster projects; in Chapel Hill, 30 percent of preliminary subdivision applications in the last ten years have been clustered. The contrast in the percentages is related to differences in the ordinances' requirements regarding open space dedication and lot dimension reductions and their resultant benefits and costs to developers.

Evaluation of cluster subdivisions in these two jurisdictions reveals that although significant amounts of open space have been preserved, there are weaknesses in the details of the ordinances that are limiting their successes. Very few agricultural uses remain on the reserved areas of Montgomery County's rural cluster subdivisions'; instead they have become large lots for old farmhouse residences. The major weakness of the Chapel Hill ordinance is that it does not require a minimum amount of open space. This allows developers to benefit from reduced setback requirements while dedicating primarily steep slope and floodplain areas as open space.

An Analysis of Strategic Planning in North Carolina Communities *by Stacey Hodges*

This research, sponsored by the North Carolina Rural Economic Development Center, seeks to determine the shape that strategic planning has taken in North Carolina counties. The purpose of the study is to discover the commonalities, points of diversity, results, and lessons learned by planners. The following sources of information were analyzed: county and multi-county region strategic plans; responses to questionnaires sent to a sample of strategic planners; and telephone interviews with strategic planners. Forty counties and one region have completed the strategic planning process; fifteen counties and four multi-county regions are in the process of completing the process.

The plans and the processes from which they derive vary widely from county to county. Some of the plans are very achievable; some are visionary; some are overly expansive. Some plans are organized and visually friendly or use powerful and earthy language; others employ erudite language or use a dense, un-

friendly format.

Results varied as greatly as did the plans. Geographic region, size, and rural/urban character do not account for the variances. Despite the diversity, many planners shared common "lessons learned." The most important element of a successful plan was found to be the inclusion of broad-based participation. Citizen participation led to better decisions. Other important considerations that affected the success of a given plan included: the level of funding, careful implementation management, priority setting, and the selection of manageable issues.

The research revealed many stumbling blocks to the strategic planning process. However, strategic planning can prove to be an effective public planning tool with exciting potential if the proper input, commitment, and considerations are allowed.

Preservation and Development: A Development Management Plan for Old Havana *by Manuel T. Ochoa, Jr.*

The fall of the Soviet Union and the Eastern bloc has created political and economic difficulties for Cuba since 1989. The loss of subsidies has resulted in severe rationing, frequent blackouts, and continued deterioration of infrastructure. Meanwhile, American, foreign, and Cuban-American businesses are closely monitoring the situation and are considering strategies for development and reinvestment on the island. Rapid redevelopment could endanger the historic fabric and character of Old Havana which is deemed of "outstanding universal value" by the World Heritage Committee of UNESCO.

This paper describes the urban history and the planning and preservation history of Old Havana and then proposes a development management system for the area. The goal of the development management system is to provide a comprehensive and consistent framework that accommodates tourism and commerce, while maintaining the character of Old Havana. The development management system is based on Havana's planning traditions that balance preservation and development. The main features of the development management system include:

- an institutional plan that coordinates various planning and government institutions and encourages consistent and comprehensive planning;
- a new general plan and capital improvements plan to guide planning, preservation, and development; and
- a proposed plan of action to implement the general plan and capital improvements plan through regulations, property acquisition, and a financial strategy.

The Transportation Effects of Neo-Traditional Development *by Michael Berman*

Neo-traditional development emphasizes a return to the grid patterns and walkable streets of the early part of this century in an attempt to improve conditions in the suburbs. Its proponents claim, among other things, that neo-traditional development will lead to dramatic reductions in driving. This paper argues that neo-traditional development may reduce driving and increase walking and transit use, but the benefits will likely be more limited than some of its proponents claim.

In today's environment, it is difficult, if not impossible, to have meaningful access to the full range of activities in suburban areas without an automobile. Therefore, neo-traditional developments will reduce driving significantly only if they provide similar levels of access to activities. The greatest effects can be expected for shopping trips in areas where there are few available shopping centers and for other non-work trips that can be accommodated on foot in a neo-traditional development. This implies a planning strategy that emphasizes neo-traditional developments in fringe areas rather than in well-developed suburban areas.

Application of GIS Techniques to Open Space Suitability Modelling in the Western Cary Extra-territorial Jurisdiction *by Ed Wilson*

This paper analyzes the use of GIS techniques in open space planning. The study area is a mostly undeveloped 1,500 acre tract in the Cary Extraterritorial Jurisdiction (ETJ), just outside of present Town limits. The tract occupies the entire area bounded by five roads (NC Highway 55 and four rural roads) and forms the upper portion of the Panther Creek watershed, which drains into Jordan Lake. The project involved collecting digital and hard copy spatial data of various factors for this tract, mostly landscape features like topography, land cover, and hydrology. Using Arc-Info GIS software, these data were processed (manually digitized where required) and overlaid in order to model the most suitable open space areas. The landscape features and results of the suitability modelling were presented in a series of color maps plotted on a Calcomp electro-static plotter (approximately 40" by 30").

The possible planning applications of such an information base are discussed, but the emphasis is on the process of selecting, obtaining, and processing the data most helpful in such a study. The results are critiqued

for their level of reliability and applicability in open space planning.

Federal Urban Mass Transportation Funding and the Case of New York City's Second Avenue Subway *by Matt Lawlor*

New rail transit systems in the U.S. have been the subject of much debate in the last twenty years. This debate has centered on two aspects of these systems: construction costs and ridership levels. By and large, the new systems have cost far more than originally planned and attracted far fewer riders than forecasted. Critics have argued that these recent failures are cause enough to call into question the process by which the federal government's discretionary capital grants program is run. These programs have provided a majority of the funding for the recently built systems. Some have even suggested eliminating the grant programs.

This paper seeks to move the debate a step further, and compare the relative capital cost and ridership benefits of the new systems to the Second Avenue Subway, a system extension project in New York City which was aborted due to lack of capital funding. Simply put, the paper points out that the failure of the new systems to achieve their objectives, and the failure of the Second Avenue to be built, are closely linked. This provides further support for those who want to see the federal government's urban mass transportation capital funding scheme significantly reformed. CP

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